



Marked (Part 13) – The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Matt Chandler – November 12, 2017

[Video]

Jana: I'm Jana, and I've experienced the Holy Spirit in so many powerful ways. One of the ways is when I was 7 years old. I was lying in my bed singing hymns to the Lord when my room lit up like a bright white light. Jesus was there, and I asked him into my heart. The Lord has gifted me with teaching, encouragement, discernment, spiritual healing, and prophecy...all for his glory.

One of my favorite things to do is to come alongside young women to pray with them. Hours later when we say *amen*, we've done business with the Lord. Our hearts have been changed. I thank you, God, that over the years, you've given me great, meaningful, deep experiences with you. I've come to know you. Come, Holy Spirit. Come.

[End of video]

Good morning. It's good to see you. If you have your Bibles, Hebrews, chapter 4 is where we're going to camp out in our time together. This weekend marks the end of our fall series. If you remember back, we started the fall with kind of talking about the kind of church God had called us to be and what the mission of the church was. Then the last four weeks, we've tackled our distinctives as a church, which are those things in which Christians will disagree while still being Christians.

We started several weeks ago now talking about baptism and Communion. We said here's the deal. Presbyterians, Anglicans, and Methodists are going to disagree with where we land on this, and we disagree with where they land on this. Yet we're brothers and sisters in Christ who love one another, are going to spend a lot of time in heaven with one another celebrating the same Savior.

Then from there, we talked about the electing love of God. That love that existed for us before the foundation of the earth was laid is a good thing to be celebrated and should bring comfort to our souls. Then we taught on inerrancy. Our flag is in the ground. We're people of the Book, right? We're just unwavering Bible folk. That's going to make the world think we're a little weird. It's going to challenge us personally as the Word of God bears its weight on us.

Then last week we talked about complementarianism or how we see men and women being complements to one another, not one subservient to the other, but they complement one another for human flourishing. That leaves one last distinctive to cover, and that would be that we are a church that is on the spectrum of theology a continuist church.

If you have no church background and you don't study theological terms, that's fine. Let me explain what I mean by that. What I mean by that is The Village Church believes the miraculous sign gifts of the Holy Spirit did not cease with the death of the apostles but are still available to the church today. That's what we believe. I want to try to teach some while we do this.

There's a very large group of evangelical Christians who would reject that. Their marketing guy wasn't as good as the continuists because it's been labeled *cessationism*. You never want to have what you believe to start with a negative, right? "It ceased." They had their guy, and this is what they came up with. I am completely fair. I want to read a definition of cessationism or the opposite of what we believe from a guy I love, respect, read, listen to his sermons, and still disagree with him.

It's Tom Pennington. I could say a lot of really, really great things about Tom Pennington. I love his preaching. I've read several of his books. I have on my desk right now some writing he did around the kingdom of God as I'm setting up to preach that in the spring. I just value the way he sees. I'd have him in here to teach, just not on this. This is what Tom Pennington (who is a cessationist, the opposite of what we believe) defines cessationism as.

"We [cessationists] mean that the Spirit no longer sovereignly gives individual believers the miraculous spiritual gifts that are listed in the Scripture and that were present in the first century church. It is neither the Spirit's plan, nor his normal pattern to distribute miraculous spiritual gifts to Christians and churches today as he did in the times of the apostles. Those gifts ceased as normative with the apostles."

Now it's important to hear what he is saying. Cessationists do believe in miracles. They do believe in the kind of supernatural Holy Ghost, "What was that?" kind of moments. They're just saying it's not normative, and it's not available to the church today. We would disagree. Just so you have some background on me, when I became a Christian, it was just a few days before my eighteenth birthday. I fell among this group of kids who were just really on fire for Jesus Christ.

There was a group of them who were Assembly of God kids, and there was a group of them who were Church of Christ kids. I was the lone Baptist. Let's just talk about theological confusion really quickly, right? My Assembly of God friends... By the way, one of them who I kind of prayed with and walked with in high school is a member of The Village now. His name is Mark Allen. He was in the nine o'clock, so it was fun for me to talk about this watching him in the room because he remembers these things.

My Assembly of God friends had been told by their parents that the Baptists were kind of closed, crusty, and weren't open to the things of God, yet I was just zealous for Jesus Christ. Then I had been told they were loonies who hated the Bible and trusted what they thought more than the Word of God. Then my poor Church of Christ friends were just like, "You're not supposed to be playing instruments." We were like, "What?" It was just kind of this...

Yet as I look upon those early days of my faith, it is the grace of God in those early days walking with Mark Allen, Benji, Rodney Engelbosch, and those brothers and sister who were Holy Ghost-filled, crazy weirdos that softened my heart to consider how to see and approach these things in a way that married my favorite things: namely the Word of God and it lived out.

To talk about the sign gifts of the Holy Spirit, I want to go to Hebrews, chapter 4, verse 12 and 13. Don't think I don't know that some of our more charismatic members are like, "Wrong text, bro. No, no, no. You need 1 Corinthians 12 through 14. You need to get in the book of Acts, Pastor. You will not captivate our imagination with Hebrews 4."

Yet I'll tell you if Hebrews 4 stands in opposition to the sign gifts of the Holy Spirit, then the sign gifts of the Holy Spirit have no place in the church and we're cessationists. The Word of God interprets the Word of God. So we're not afraid of any text ever on any subject, right? I'd better get an *amen* on that, or I'm preaching a different... Okay. All right. Maybe you guys gave it to me at Plano, Dallas, Fort Worth, Southlake, but here in Flower Mound, it was a little slow. Now here we go. Hebrews, chapter 4, starting in verse 12:

"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account."

Now it's important to note kind of where this very well known passage among Christians is situated in the book of Hebrews, namely that this passage is found amidst a ton of warning about the people of God and how the people of God relate to and interact with their King. This is not just kind of a random text about the Bible in the Bible. It's actually found within the context of warning about how the people of God interact with God.

It is rooted in Psalm 95. It is rooted back into Exodus. We'll talk more about that here in a moment, but I think what I want to do at the beginning here is define what's happening when we read here, **"For the word of God is living and active..."** John Owen, who just was a guy who left a mark on me, wrote a very dense, difficult book, *The Mortification of Sin*, which might not sound like fun reading for you, but it significantly shaped how I viewed sin, my desire to put sin to death in my life, and my zeal to live a holy life before a holy God.

John Owen would kind of line up with the patristics in the medieval period, and he would say the Word of God in Hebrews, chapter 4, is talking about Jesus. When he reads this text, he is saying Jesus is living and active. Jesus is sharper than any two-edged sword. Then John Calvin (one of the great Reformers who also left a mark on me) would say John *isn't* talking about Jesus. They weren't peers, so he didn't actually say that to him. He just writes and says that's an incorrect interpretation.

Because the writer of Hebrews is referencing Psalm 95 that's referencing the book of Exodus, which you know a lot about, he is saying this is not about Jesus; this is about the written Word of God. This is about the Book. Then Spurgeon, who is my boy, is going to look at John Owen and John Calvin disagreeing and not want to get in the mix.

On the surface, he gives this answer I thought early on in studying was just kind of a sellout kind of way. He was like, "Actually, you're both right." I'm like, "Oh, give me a break, Spurgeon. You coward! 'Oh, you're both right.' I mean, how 2017 are you, Spurgeon?" Yet as I studied and read, here was Spurgeon's point.

The Son of God and the Word of God are so woven together in the purposes of God that to try to tease them apart from one another is the undoing of either. Spurgeon's point is when you read the Word of God as living and active you're to think about the Son of God revealed by the written Word of God. Are you with me? That's what's being had here.

What we see is the Word of God is a serious matter. It is not to be taken lightly. Now for time's sake, after three 50-something minute sermons, I have cut some things. But if we had time and could go read Hebrews 3:12 through 4:11, you're going to find nothing but the warning of God on his people for how they hear his Word and don't do it.

Later this week, I want you to read all of this, but here's what's said in those verses. He says to them, "Hey, take care. Be careful." He is going to say, "Do not harden your hearts." He is going to say early in chapter 4 that the message (the Word of God) they heard did not benefit them. He is going to say, "Did not their bodies fall in the wilderness, and did they not enter his rest?"

See, the book of Hebrews up until this point is just a blanket warning that the people of God have a tendency to hear the Word of God and not submit to it, to hear the Word of God but reject it. That's what he is saying. "Hey, be careful. Don't do that." The refrain up until this point is, "Today if you hear his voice, don't harden your heart. Today if you hear his voice..."

Now that's all a quote from Psalm 95 where King David is referencing Exodus where the people of God heard the Word of God and rejected it. He is saying this is what the people of God do. Now look. Here's what we'll do. What we'll do is we'll kind of look at this kind of like we look at the Pharisees when we hear about the Pharisees. We're just like, "Had I been there, Jesus, in the first century, I would have been your guy. I would have been your lady, Savior, King Jesus. I would not be like those weak vessels who ran, who turned their back, who denied."

Yet what about your life is leading you to believe that? What revisionist history we must have? What self-aggrandizing tendencies must exist in our hearts? No, he is saying, "Since the beginning, my people have heard my Word, gotten energized by it, and then fallen away from it." In the middle of this idea of warning, take care. Be careful. Don't harden your heart. Today, today, today, today, today, today. If you hear his voice, he then ties it to the solution to this problem.

"For the word of God is living and active..." Let's just talk about this text, and then I need to own some things. The Word of God is alive. I love this. This is what the Bible is teaching about. This book is not just a book of history, although it has history in it. It's not just a book of laws, although there are laws in it. It's just not a book of stories, although there are stories in it. This book is alive. It's living. It produces. It does stuff.

This is not the only text where the Bible is talked about in these ways. This is Acts, chapter 7. This is Stephen, who is not an apostle. He doesn't work at the church. He is just a layman. Here's his job. If you have a church background and maybe small church background where you did like a potluck and somebody had to organize that Wednesday night potluck meal... We're just not going to have one of those here. Just 10,000 people doing potluck is just not a good idea.

Stephen basically ran the potluck for widows at the church in Jerusalem. This is a lay guy. I don't know what his regular job was but, man, his theological chops are breathtaking. I want to encourage you. Just because you don't work for a church and haven't been through seminary doesn't mean you can't know deeply systematic theology and the story of God you find yourself in.

As Stephen is preaching this sermon that starts with creation and ends with the resurrection of Jesus, he says this in Acts 7 referencing Moses on Mount Sinai. **"This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. He received..."** What? **"...living oracles to give to us."**

Do you hear it? It's the Law. So the Law (the Ten Commandments, the things God gave to Moses to give to the people of God) was given as living oracles. They weren't static. They were meant to accomplish something. Again, 1 Peter 1:22 through 23 says, **"Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God."** There it is again. **"...living and abiding..."**

The Word of God is alive. It's accomplishing things. Now I love this because you and I are here today because the Word of God is alive. In our last service, this second row right here was filled with men and women here from Australia. They're from the future. Now how did we get Christians in Australia? That's a long way from Jerusalem. The Word of God went out.

I met a man right before the nine o'clock service who is a member in my friend's church in Dubai who came up to me and became a Christian in Saudi Arabia. How? Because the Word of God is living. Because it won't be stopped. Because God smirks at the idea of closed countries and opposition to the gospel. It's not really opposition when you're God. It's rebellion, but it's certainly not opposition.

The Word of God is living, but he also says it's active or it's effective. Again, if you have a church background, you'll know this text. Isaiah 55:11: "**...so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.**"

Listen. This is my verse here. I love this verse. Do you know why? Because here's what this verse is saying. The Spirit of God does the work of God through the Word of God. Look at me. The Spirit of God does the work of God through the Word of God. Now let me tell you why that's such good news for me: because I have to teach the Bible. Here's what that means. It isn't on me. I don't have to perform for you. I don't have to motivate you into the kingdom. I don't bear the weight of trying to save your soul. I preach the Word of God prayerfully, hopefully, and God reaps.

That frees me. That means I don't have to have a lot of pressure on me that you like me. In fact, one of the more deadly things for you and for me is for you to prefer my style and how I do things over and above the Word of God. You will doom me, and you will doom you. No, no. What The Village Church wants to celebrate is the Word, not the one preaching the Word, although we can rejoice, honor, and do all of those things.

I certainly have my own stylistic preferences, and yet the thing I want to treasure above everything else is the fullness of the counsel of God in the Word being fearlessly proclaimed. If you ever wonder, "Why is Chandler preaching three times a month and not...?" Or if you're like, "Oh, he is not preaching today? Oh, should we leave?" that's going to harm us as a community.

Look. I'm going to die. I already came close once. You should not put a lot of hope in me. I will let you down. Here's what I've learned after 20 years of ministry. The farther you put me up, the more you'll hate me when I disappoint you. I'm not carrying that. That will be on you. That won't be on me because I'm telling you now I'm weak and frail, and I know I'm good at talking. I can motivate you, but I can't transform you.

I mean, I've done this... I've been your pastor for 15 years next weekend. Here's what I know. I know I can teach in such a way and set up tables in the foyer that you'll be like, "Oh, I'll do that." You'll sign up, and four weeks later, you'll stop doing it. I can present to you, "Hey, this is a real issue of need in our church. We need volunteers." You'll be like, "Yeah!" You'll go get trained, you'll serve three times, and then you'll just stop coming.

Do you know what that reveals to me? That I have no power to transform you. I can encourage you, but my experience is that rarely makes it out of the parking lot. Do you know how dependent and desperate that makes me and then how happy this text makes me that the Word does the work, how I get to be freed up from those expectations to entertain you? No, no, no. I just get to preach God's Word and trust the Spirit of God will do the work of God through the Word of God.

It's just such a gift. Such a gift! It's not just living. It's not just active. It pierces, right? It pierces! What does it pierce? It pierces the soul and the spirit, those psychological aspects, that immaterial force that makes up who we are. If you hear me talking about our guts, that's what I'm talking about. Like who we really are. This thing in here that is *us* is the soul and the spirit. I wish I had more time to tease this out. That's another sermon for another day. I'm not breaking 55 minutes again.

You have this soul, this spirit inside of you, and the Bible says the Word of God penetrates that. You can't hide. Later on, the text will say it lays us naked before God to whom we must give an account, but it's not just the soul and spirit. It also penetrates the joints and the marrow. This is this aspect of our physical, material being. These two together summarize human existence so the Word of God penetrates, cuts open, human existence and lays it bare before God to whom we must give an account.

Now you know this if you're a Christian because the Word of God found you somewhere and opened you up. You saw you were a sinner, and you saw the motivations of your heart were dark. You received the grace of God, and everything changed moving forward. That's what the Word of God does. It penetrates and lays bare. It opens up, and we are naked before the God to whom we must give an account. This is what the Word of God does.

Now remember all of this is in the context of warning God's people. Do not harden your heart. Today if you hear his voice, move *toward* him, not *from* him. Don't let the Word you hear today be

meaningless to you. Apply it. Eat it. Devour it. Walk in it. Live courageously in gladness, in obedience to the Word of God.

Maybe at this point in the sermon, we're 20 minutes in, and you're like, "Uh, I'm just new here, but I thought we were talking about the sign gifts of the Holy Spirit. JT has already done what you're doing. We've already decided we believe in the inerrancy of the Bible. Why do you keep talking about the inerrancy of the Bible? We have already covered that, Chandler. You were supposed to talk about the weird gifts of the Spirit."

This is why you and I get along so well. You always are at that place in my notes when it's time to transition. Here's my point and why The Village Church is a church that is a continuist church, not a cessationist church. Because it's that living, active Word that pierces and lays bare, that bids me to eagerly desire to prophesy. It's that Word of God that commands that. I'm not pulling that out of nowhere. The Bible says eagerly desire to prophesy so that the church might be built up, encouraged, and consoled.

It's my Bible that tells me the gift of tongues builds me up and strengthens my inner man. It's the sacred text that tells me God will give dreams to his children and impressions to their hearts, and words of knowledge build us up into Jesus. We're continuists because we believe the Bible. Now let's chat about this.

First Corinthians 12 through 14 clearly line out what the sign gifts are and what they're for. Even cessationists would have to say these chapters are about how the sign gifts are to be used in a local body. They're there. We're going to teach through those this summer. I don't have time to kind of walk through all of this, but here's what I would lay before you.

My whole life in Christ, I have felt like a theological orphan. If you know theological terms, to be *reformed* and *charismatic*, that's a theological mutt. I have felt like the child of divorced parents who badmouth one another every time I'm at their house for the weekend.

I feel like I go to my dad's house. He is like, "Your mom is such a loon. I swear! Here. Give her this book to read. I just don't know why...? Does she even memorize? Is she always going out of her gut? I just don't understand why she... Does she know she is deceived? She is probably letting demons into her house. She might even be getting demons on you. You just need to be careful."

Then I go to Mom's house, and she is like, "Uhm, your dad knows the Bible, so why is he so angry all the time? What is he upset about? Why does he feel like he is constantly having to defend God as though God were helpless and unable to defend himself?" Then I feel like I'm telling Mom, "Listen. He just loves the Word of God, and some of the things... You need to frame them in the Word of God, Mom. It's just so evident you love Jesus, but the Word of God does have some boundaries on how these things operate.

Dad, please, brother. The Word shouldn't be making you angry. It should be making you free. If the Word of God is making you crusty, then I think you're missing something out of the Word of God." I've just felt stuck between these two worlds, and I'm longing at The Village Church to be a church that sees Mom and Dad remarried, the convergence of Spirit and truth, Word and wonder. I'm hungry for it and asking God to do it.

So let's look at one more text. I need to own some things, and we'll dream together. First Thessalonians 5:19 through 22. Now I love that this verse is found in this book because also in the letters to the churches at Thessalonica, there is this warning that there's this fake revival coming and that the Christian must be careful of this fake revival because it will be marked by excess and by people turning away from the living God.

It's good to know, yet in the middle of that warning about that kind of revival, we read this. This is 1 Thessalonians 5:19 through 22. **"Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil."** So there are two things here you're *not* to do and one thing you *are* to do. Let's do this quickly.

The first is, **"Do not quench..."** Now the word *quench* here means to extinguish, to put out. You can quench the Spirit or extinguish the work of the Spirit by resisting the Spirit (we see that in the Scriptures), by neglecting the Spirit, or by ignoring the Spirit. You can do that! You can really stop some really beautiful gifts in your own heart and for the church by resisting, quenching, or extinguishing the work of the Spirit.

Now before God and before you, I have in my leadership and in some fear (and because partly how I'm wired) been guilty of neglecting, ignoring, and not opening up this conversation like I should have. I've owned that before the Lord, and I'm owning that before you today because one of the graces on my life is, although I am bent a certain way, God continues to send to me over the course of the last 20-something years really weird people. Like seriously!

Charismatic folk are weird. They're just odd. You can see some things, and you're like, "Dang! I wish I could pray like that, but I don't really want to be like them." They're just really strange people. By the grace of God, he has just sent me those people. I've had these moments where it was just like nothing I want to be a part of and yet God profoundly used it. I'll give you an example so we can have this conversation about my neglect and about my hope.

In Abilene, Texas, I was a sophomore in college. I was teaching in this park in Abilene to a student ministry there in Abilene. I had finished, and Billy Bob White (I'm in Abilene, Texas) got up after me. He began to lead worship in this park. I walked off to the side. I was just watching what God was doing.

I think if I saw this man again, I'm not sure if I'd recognize him. I know he was really tan, and he was bald. He walked up to me, and he just grabbed the sides of my head and blew on me. Then here's what he said. He said, "Listen. You probably think I'm insane but, man, I am here because I have been sent here, I think, for you. God has asked me to come here and blow on you. Maybe that will make sense to you one day, and maybe it won't. That's all." Then he vanished.

Now look. Look at me. That's crazy. I don't think we should start a ministry here called "Holy Ghost blowage." I just don't. That doesn't make any sense to me, but here's what I'll tell you. From that day forward, the effectiveness of my ministry, the power of my preaching, and the response to my preaching increased in a way that's hard to communicate.

So look. I don't know what that was. I don't have a category for that. I'm certainly not asking you to run around town blowing on people's faces. I am saying that according to this text I can test that up and against the Word of God. I can test that upon the fruit of what the Spirit does. What does the Spirit do? It makes much of Jesus. Not much of gifts, not much of men, but much of Jesus.

I can look at my life and say God did something that day through that weirdo guy who I wouldn't even know what to talk about if I ever saw him again. "Remember that time you blew in my face? Thank you." You know? I mean, that's the kind of thing. God has just done that over and over and over again with me where he is just not going to let me drift toward the camp I think I'm more naturally bent toward.

Do you know how much easier it is to just kind of *preach* the Book and not *do* the Book? Do you know how much easier it is to *know* the Word and not *live* the Word? You do know, because not just in this area but also in a ton of areas, we know to *know* the Word is easier than to *do* the Word. We know this in all sorts of areas in our lives, and yet the Spirit of God would beckon us in the book of Hebrews, "**Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts...**" Don't quench the Spirit.

Then he says, "**Do not despise prophecies...**" Now prophecies are easy to despise. I know when we hear the word *prophecy*, we might be all over the place in how we define it. We're going to get to that this summer, but for our conversation today, *prophecy* is a supernatural word given to a person for someone else to build them up and encourage them in the Lord.

It's them knowing something they shouldn't know for the purposes of encouraging our hearts. That's what prophecy is according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 14. Words of knowledge and prophecy are given to encourage and build up the body. It's a supernatural understanding of something the person should not know that they then speak to encourage a saint. He says don't despise prophecies.

Now let me tell you why prophecies are easy to despise. In churches like The Village where we're going to say, "Hey, theologically we believe the sign gifts of the Holy Spirit are for people today," but we haven't had the courage or the conviction to actually teach and train in such a way that people can mature in their gifts, people use their gift in immature ways, leading to that gift being despised. Let me give a real example from our church.

About 10 years ago, a young man walked up to a dear friend of mine at the church and said this to them: "God has told me..." By the way, just so we can be friends, don't ever say that to me. Don't you ever! You don't get, "Thus saith the Lord." That's closed. What you get is a ton of humility, saying, "I feel impressed by the Spirit to lay this before you. Will you pray about this and discern whether or not this is true?"

You don't get to say to me, "The Lord told me..." You don't get to say to anybody, "The Lord told me..." It involves a lot more humility than that. The canon is closed. Are you with me? Because you need to be getting as excited about that as you are about everything else. Okay? He came up to my friend, and he said, "God has told me your sin is going to destroy this church." Now that word has haunted my friend for over a decade.

Now let's be straight here. Maybe this young buck actually did get a sense from the Lord, and yet without training, without correction, without rebuke, what should have come out like, "Hey, brother. It's evident the gift of leadership is resting on you. It's just as I watch you lead and love this congregation, I just feel compelled by the Holy Spirit. You pray about that. In fact, you don't even need to pray about that. This is what the Word of God says, that you'd be serious about holiness, brother, and that you'd be mindful and watchful of the Enemy's desire to destroy you."

That's how that impression should have come out, not, "God has told me you're going to destroy this church," because prophecy builds up. It encourages. "Fat cows of Bashan, you're going to be gutted and spread on the mountains." That's over. That's over! That's Amos, by the way if you're like, "What?" I'm just quoting the prophet Amos. Amos was just upset about some things.

Now let me highlight this because I think it's significant. I don't know if you've picked up on this, but every other gift in the Bible gets the grace of coaching and patience while the gift matures, except the sign gifts. Watch this. Let me take this off the table so you'll interact with me. I've just learned.

How many of you have ever heard really bad preaching? I mean, just terrible! The kind of preaching that made you want to pull the guy aside and go, "Hey, yeah, don't do that again. Just don't do that." "Well, I love the Word!" "Well, read the Word, and then sit down. Just don't expound on it anymore. It's just not your gift. I think even God today was like, 'Yeah, just read it, and let someone else expound on it. Just have a seat. Your gift is hospitality. That is not the gift I gave you.'"

Now we have, and yet what happens if in our community... When other guys preach who are on our staff, do you know what we do? We sit down with them afterward, and we walk them through. We say, "Hey, you did *this* so well. *This* was a beautiful point. Man, *this* was powerful. Also, you might want to include some transition sentences so people know what you're talking about. You didn't know it. It was obvious you hadn't worked on a conclusion, brother. You flew that plane around the airport for 20 minutes. You have to work on that conclusion, boss. All right?"

What are we doing? We're coaching, but just because we've heard bad preaching doesn't make us go, "Throw preaching out!" Has anybody just done a really terrible job evangelizing ever? Yeah, but we're not going to say, "Quit evangelizing." All I knew when I got saved is you had to love Jesus or you were going to hell. That's a pretty terrible kind of launching pad for evangelism. "Hey, do you want to come to church with me?" "No." "Well, you might go to hell." That's just not very effective.

Do you know what happened? People pulled me aside and were like, "Hey, I love your zeal, Matt. It's just evident Christ has done something in your life. Some thoughts..." In fact, in my first preaching class in Bible college... I was already preaching a ton. Dr. James Shields said this to me in front of everyone. He said, "Brother Smooth," which is offensive to me.

He said, "In 20 minutes, you preached nine different sermons. I think if you would ever just settle into one of those concepts and build one sermon out instead of nine, then you're going to be a really effective communicator," to which I thought, "You're 72 years old. What do you know about preaching to Gen X?" I was 20, which tends to be (not always) synonymous with arrogance. If you're 20 and you're like, "I don't think I'm arrogant," I think you're proving my point. All the old people clapped. "Yeah!"

Now in this, what is it? It's correction. It's rebuking. What does the work? The Word does the work. We're coming to the preacher, and we're saying, "Hey, the Word would say this is what preaching is. This thing you're doing isn't preaching. *This* is preaching." The Word is going to say, "Heralding the good news of the gospel looks like *this*. Hospitality looks like *this*. Service looks like *this*. Giving looks like *this*. Administration looks like *this*. These are the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and here's how they look."

When it comes to the sign gifts, we're like, "That's messy. It's complicated. It's goofy. Just ignore it." But here he is saying, "Don't despise prophecy." Then we have what we are to do. Look how he ends this text. I'll put it back up. **"Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil."** I love this idea. He says test or, rather, discern. He doesn't say be careful. He doesn't say be skeptical of. He doesn't say put on the seatbelt and helmet. He doesn't say just be really, really guarded.

I mean, one of the things I was taught at First Baptist Church of Texas City is any of this stuff was a doorway for demons to get into my life. If I tried to hear the Lord, if I stepped out in faith and did something risky, what I was doing was inviting evil spirits to confuse me and to lead me away from the Lord. I mean, literally! This is an argument many cessationists would make that really it's kind of witchcraft, demonic stuff.

Well, here's the great news about that. We get to test and discern. Do you know how we test and discern? If what is going on makes much of Jesus Christ and doesn't stand in opposition to his Word, it's the Holy Spirit. If you have a background in charismania and you're like, "I grew up in East

Texas behind the Pine Curtain, and it was crazy. It was fake, and it was manufactured," okay, that's not what I'm talking about.

If you're like, "I was flipping through the channel. I saw those weirdos. I don't want any part of that," well, that isn't what I'm talking about. What I'm talking about is convergence. I'm talking about Word and wonder, Spirit and truth. That's what I'm talking about. I'm talking about the power of God and the presence of his people as defined in his Word for the glory of Jesus Christ.

Test. Discern. Don't be skeptical. Don't be careful. Test. Discern. Pursue. Don't neglect. Don't ignore. Grow. Be curious, but test. Test! **"Hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil."** How do we know what's good and what's evil? Well, the Word does it, doesn't it? The Word helps us with that. That's why we don't have to be afraid: because he has given us the Book. I love it!

I'm going to just end with this. Maybe this would be a more kind of visceral, "This is what he is talking about." When I was in Abilene, Texas, I worked at a church called Beltway Park Church. It's probably the largest church in West Texas now. At the time, Steve Hardin (who is our Dallas Campus pastor) was an interim there. He took that congregation from about 160 to about 70 people, so very effective. (I love you, Steve.) He was very effective in leadership.

Then they hired this 28-year-old man named David McQueen. He is an odd cat in that he grew up and was educated Church of Christ. Then after he finished his master's, he went up to Lubbock and became an associate at a large charismatic church called Trinity in Lubbock. Then this small Baptist church between two cow pastures hired him. So you can just call this like a failure of subcommittees *ad nauseam*.

David becomes the pastor, and here's where I learned a lot from him. He didn't have any money, but he had seats at the table. He approached me. He was like, "Look. I can't pay you much. In fact, I think your starting salary would be about \$7 a year, but I can give you a seat at the table. I can train you and help you understand ministry." I came on staff. My first kind of full-time church job ever was as an associate pastor at Beltway Park Church, which just goes by Beltway.

There at Beltway, I did all sorts of things, but one night I had finished teaching on a Wednesday night. Lauren and I were heading out (we had just been married) to my car, and Bob Hamp (who was discipling me in some ways back then)... I was pushing on him in some things. I was just much more in a skeptical season of my life.

I eventually need to ask forgiveness for David McQueen and some of those guys out there, because I was the guy in the elder room who was like, "Y'all are insane." Any time a 24-year-old tells a group of 40- and 50-year-olds they're insane is usually not right.

Then from there, Bob Hamp sees Lauren and me walking out. He was like, "Hey, Chandlers! Chandlers! What do you think God is doing in Abilene tonight?" I know the answer to that question. "He is seeking and saving the lost. He is establishing his kingdom forever." I just quoted a couple of verses. Bob was like, "No, no, no. Like specifically, what do you think he is doing?" I was like, "Yeah, I'm not sure." He was like "Well, let's go ask him." "Okay."

So we go into my little office, and Bob prays for us. "Spirit of the living God, we just ask you would speak to us tonight, you would encourage our hearts. We want to make much of Jesus Christ in this city for your fame. We just ask, Spirit, you would speak to us tonight." Then he said, "Matt, Lauren, if something comes to your mind, I want you to write it down."

Here's where I knew all of this was nonsense. The first thing that popped in my head was the Whataburger on S. 27th Street. I thought, "I'm hungry. The Spirit of God has just confirmed I need a taquito." I wrote in my journal, per Bob Hamp's prompting, "Whataburger S. 27th." Then I from there saw in my mind... I just don't know how else to explain this. I just had this impression of a man with black pants and a blue shirt on. I wrote down, "Black pants. Blue shirt." Then I saw pigtails, so I wrote down, "Pigtails."

This confirmed to me that this was nonsense, so I said basically as much to Bob. Then he was like, "Well, let's go see if it is." We got in our car, and we drove to the Whataburger on S. 27th. We got out of the car, walked into Whataburger on S. 27th. No one who met that description was in there. There were a lot of people there. Many people don't know this but Abilene really is a college town. There are three universities and a large Air Force base there. It's a very young town in not even West Texas but they call themselves West Texas.

We walked in, and he was like, "Do you know what? Why don't we just get something to eat?" Like I said, I had already felt like the Spirit told me to get a taquito. I walked up to the counter, and I ordered food. While I got our order, Lauren stayed at the seat. I grabbed our food, and when I turned to walk, I saw what was the man who I thought I saw in my mind. It freaked me out.

I sat down next to Lauren. I was like, "Oh my gosh! I think that's the guy," to which my wife was like, "He doesn't have pigtails." I don't know why I use that voice. That's not how my wife sounds. She doesn't sound anything like that. I don't know why I do that. I haven't been able to stop in 20 years of preaching.

I mean, she was First Baptist Church Longview, man! She was like, "What? That man ain't wearing pigtails." I was like, "I know he is not, but I'm just telling you I think this is him." He had it backward. He had blue pants and a black shirt. We just started eating. I was freaking out a little bit. I don't know how to explain it. I just knew. I just knew that's who the Lord had shown me.

Then about five minutes later, Bob walked him over to me and said, "Matt, do you have that piece of paper in your pocket?" I pulled out that piece of paper, and I handed it to him. He opened it up, and he just started weeping and sat down with us. Here was the story. While he came in and stood beyond Bob Hamp in line, who hadn't ordered yet, he tapped Bob on the shoulder and said, "Hey, Bob Hamp, right? Do you remember me? About 10-12 years ago, we were bringing our daughter to you."

Bob was a longtime marriage and family counselor. By the way, you can read this story in Bob's book or you can hear the testimony of this man I'm talking about, who I think shared this testimony two weeks later at Beltway Park.

He said, "We brought our daughter to you. Do you remember the little girl? She always was wearing pigtails. She has given herself over to the darker side of things. We have been at the jail all night, Bob. She got busted selling drugs and in possession with a great deal of drugs and some other things. We're trying to get her out of jail. It's not looking good, but we're just exhausted. So I came here to just get us some dinner. Would you be praying for us?"

Bob was like, "Hold on. Come meet a friend of mine" and brought him over to me. Here's what happened, and I'll shrink this story. We sat down and just encouraged his heart and gave him that piece of paper.

Then he took his Whataburger and that piece of paper back to the jail, sat down with his daughter, showed his daughter the piece of paper, explained to his daughter what God had just done, and that he thought this was God after her, longing to forgive her, heal her, and bring her into the kingdom.

That night in a jail cell in Abilene, Texas, that young woman professed faith in Jesus Christ. Yes! Two weeks later, they stood up (dad and daughter) and shared that story.

Now here's what I would tell you. I think cessationists would go, "Yeah, that happened. It was a miracle." But they would say it's not normative and shouldn't be pursued. It's just I just disagree. Now that is easily the most significant thing that's happened to me, but there have been lesser, just equally as amazing...

Think Katie Carley. You can ask Katie this when you pick up your kids in Little Village. We were praying over here a couple of months ago, and I just saw in my head while we were praying this sunflower burst out of the ground and turn toward the sun, which isn't supernatural. That's what sunflowers do.

I said to Katie, "Hey, forgive me. When we were praying for you, I saw this sunflower burst out of the ground and turn toward the sun." She was like, "Thanks." I was like, "Oh, okay. I'm going to have to probably look for a new associate. She is out. She is like, 'You're crazy. I'm leaving.'" Then she came downstairs later that day, and she brought me a note. I thought about scanning the note in to put it on the screen, but like I said, I'll just keep this... This sermon won't end.

She had on one side of the letter just probably 10 or 11 pictures of sunflowers with her family. Then she wrote me a note on the other side that said the sunflower had been a crest in their family. They plant sunflowers every year in their backyard, and they've taught their daughters about what it means to follow Jesus Christ by watching the sunflower come, turn, and find the sun. She said, "I felt so personally loved and touched by God. Thank you."

If these aren't one-off miracles but available to the body, what would it be like to be people who gave ourselves over to this in the understanding that we're going to stumble along the way? We're going to need to correct one another. We're going to need to come alongside of one another and go, "Hey, don't say that again. That's not the way this works. This is what the Word of God... You must come under the Word."

What would it be like to not be afraid but to pursue, to be curious, to open up our hearts? If you find yourself curious about these things, I couldn't recommend more highly Sam Storms' book *Practicing the Power*. I might put that in the church email this week. It's just a beautiful book. It will give some theological undertones, and it will also talk practically how we work these things out in

the church. Here's your pastor's heart: that the Village Church would be a place of true convergence, Spirit and truth, Word and wonder. Can he do it? Let's pray.

Father, thank you. Thank you for how in a thousand ways you've shown yourself to be alive and that you penetrate and lay bare, that your Word leads us into wonders. I pray you would quiet any fears we might have about charismania, that you would replace those pictures and fears with the beauty spelled out in your Word. I ask, God, you protect us as you lead us and guide us. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

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