

Don't Forget Why

Connect Group Guide - 8.9.26

Opening Prayer

Key Scripture

- Galatians 5:22-23
- James 1:3-4
- Romans 2:4
- Micah 6:8

Message Recap

This week's message served as a bridge between our study of the fruit of the Spirit and our upcoming study of spiritual gifts. Before diving into what the gifts are and how they work, the pastor called the church to step back and remember why any of this matters. The central warning is this: we can become so fascinated with spiritual gifts that we forget the one who gives them. True ministry begins with awe, flows from worship, and always points back to Jesus.

Key Takeaways

- The Trinity models perfect unity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit never compete for glory. They always point to one another, and the church is called to reflect that same unity.
- The Holy Spirit always leads us to Jesus. Every genuine move of the Spirit makes Christ bigger, not personalities, churches, or emotions.
- Spiritual gifts are not for you. They are given by God because He loves His church, and they exist to build up the body of Christ.
- Order matters. Character before calling, fruit before function, holiness before ministry. The Spirit develops who you are before He develops what you do.
- Awe protects us from pride. When we stay overwhelmed by who God is, we are less likely to start treating His gifts as our own.
- The church needs you, but you need the church more. Every believer has a gift, and sitting on that gift deprives both you and others of what God intends.

Discussion Questions

Opening Questions

1. When you first became a Christian, what did you think the Christian life was mostly going to be about? How has that understanding changed over time?
2. Pastor Mike mentioned watching Drew Brees' Hall of Fame speech and thinking, "I want to be in Jesus' Hall of Fame." What does it mean to you personally to hear Jesus say, "Well done, good and faithful servant"?

The Trinity and Unity

3. Pastor Mike described the Trinity as a model of perfect unity where each person points to the others rather than competing for glory. What would it look like for your small group, or your church as a whole, to reflect that same kind of unity?
4. He said, "Every genuine move of the Spirit makes Christ bigger. Not personalities. Not churches. Not denominations. Not emotions. Just Jesus." Can you think of a time when something in church life started drawing attention away from Jesus? How did that affect the people involved?

Awe Before Ministry

5. Pastor Mike referenced Isaiah's experience in Isaiah 6, pointing out that Isaiah said "Woe is me" before he ever said "Here am I, send me." Why do you think awe and a sense of unworthiness have to come before ministry? What happens when they do not?
6. He said, "Real ministry begins when we have the awe of God." On a practical, everyday level, what keeps you in a place of awe toward God? What tends to pull you out of it?

Fruit Before Gifts

7. Pastor Mike laid out this sequence: character before calling, fruit before function, holiness before ministry. Do you agree with this order? Have you ever seen what happens when someone skips steps in this sequence?

8. He shared honestly that studying the fruit of the Spirit has changed how he thinks about and responds to people. Has focusing on the fruit of the Spirit -- love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control -- changed anything about how you interact with others? Where do you still feel the tension between the flesh and the Spirit?

Fruit Before Gifts

9. Pastor Mike said, "The gifts don't exist for us. The gifts exist because God loves His church." How does that reframe the way you think about whatever gifting God has placed in you?
10. He asked the congregation directly: "Do you really realize how much the church needs you?" Then he said to multiply that by a million and that is how much you need the church. Do you genuinely feel that need for the body of Christ? What makes it easy or hard to feel that sense of belonging and interdependence?
11. He said the enemy is skilled at convincing believers they do not really need the church. What are some of the most common lies people believe that keep them from being fully engaged and serving within the body?

Personal Reflection

12. Pastor Mike closed by addressing three groups: those who do not yet know Christ, believers who are not yet using their gifts, and prodigals who have drifted away. Which of those categories resonates most with where you are right now, and what would it look like to take a next step this week?

Practical Applications

- **Pray specifically about your gift.** This week, set aside intentional time to ask the Holy Spirit: "What have you placed inside of me? Where do you want me to serve?" If you are unsure where to start, ask a trusted believer or church leader who knows you well to speak into that question with you.
- **Audit where your attention goes.** When you talk about church, worship, or spiritual experiences, notice whether your conversations end with Jesus being bigger or with something else -- a feeling, a person, or a program -- getting the credit. Practice redirecting toward Him.

- **Identify one place to serve.** If you are currently sitting on your gift, make a concrete move this week. Reach out to a ministry leader, sign up for a team, or simply raise your hand and say you are available. Do not wait until you feel fully ready.
- **Practice asking the Spirit for what you lack.** The pastor described asking the Holy Spirit for love, peace, or patience when he was not feeling it naturally. Try this in a specific relationship or situation this week where your flesh wants to respond one way and the Spirit is calling you to respond another way.
- **Encourage someone in their gifting.** Think of one person in your group or church whose gift you have benefited from. Tell them specifically this week. Gifts thrive when they are affirmed and celebrated within the body.

Prayer Requests & Closing

Leader Notes

- Be sensitive to different perspectives on Israel; focus on biblical teaching rather than politics
- Encourage participation from everyone, but don't force anyone to share
- If someone wants to give their life to Christ during discussion, be prepared to pray with them
- Keep the discussion focused on personal application, not just theological debate
- Consider inviting someone knowledgeable about Israel or Jewish culture to a future meeting