

Message 06

by George Verwer

George Verwer's sermon highlights the vital role of the local church in global missions, emphasizing worship, prayer, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 40:51

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Acts 12:5-13

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Missions Work"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit and being willing to be sent out as workers for God. He highlights the need for churches to prioritize prayer and not neglect intercessory prayer. The speaker also expresses gratitude to those who are already supporting missions and encourages them to continue their commitment. Lastly, the sermon mentions the proclamation of the word of God and the importance of addressing various social issues such as poverty, abuse, and the environment.

Transcript

You can help us by spreading the word around about this vision and this need and you may be surprised the Holy Spirit may use you to recruit someone strategic for global missions and it's exciting to have my friend Miriam Johansen here. Miriam would you stand up? She was a librarian on one of our ships. Now she's from Southern Connecticut.

What's the name of your town? Stanford, I've always heard of that. So do meet her and she's a librarian there now and her parents are with her and we just appreciate some of our friends coming quite a distance to be with us. Our passage of scripture for tonight is Acts chapter 13.

Turn to the book of Acts chapter 13. Here we have a tremendous picture of the church. The book of Acts of course is one of my favorite books.

I share my testimony Sunday night. All this material is available on cassette tape but I shared my testimony based on Acts chapter 20 and now we're moving on to Acts chapter 13. To get a picture of a biblical church in action.

Now this church was only formed by a group of people who were scattered because of persecution. Sometimes things are accomplished through a very systematic approach but sometimes God works in a

very spontaneous way and often we don't know exactly what God is doing. Especially when there's a hardship, there's unemployment, there's persecution, people are scattered, change of plans, losing your job, that's fun.

So these people were scattered because of the persecution and they ended up, some of them, in Antioch and they started that church in Antioch. Let's start from verse 1. In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon, Colnagier, Neus, Lucius, Cyrene, Menaen, who had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch and Saul. By the way, I was reading a commentary about this just the other day pointing out what an international group this was.

This was international, this was interracial 2,000 years ago. How slow our churches in America have often been to become international and become interracial. Two days ago Doug Hall and his wife drove up from Boston and we had lunch together and Doug pioneered that research in Boston to show that the church was four times bigger than anybody knew because they were ethnic minority groups just worshipping here, worshipping there and no one had ever really done much research and the steps they've taken since that and the impact that's been made on Boston is now a story being told all over the world.

So here we have this little international, interracial group. What are they doing? They're doing what we're doing at nine o'clock in the morning. While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting the Holy Spirit said, set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

So after they had fasted and prayed they placed their hands on them and they sent them off. Two of them sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. When they arrived at Selemus they proclaimed the Word of God in the Jewish synagogue and John was with them as their helper.

What a tremendous picture. I want you to try to remember seven major important biblical truths from these verses. Maybe you'd like to write these down.

You can you can summarize each one of them with one word. So basically I'm going to share seven words from Acts 13. Just those first five or six verses.

Seven words that I believe are very motivating. Seven words that are enlightening. Seven words that I believe can help us know God's will for our life.

If a year from now you can remember any of these words and you send me an email I'll send you one free book for each word that you can remember. The first word is the word church. In the church at Antioch.

It would be a blessing for me if you would return from this week to your own local church with a higher esteem of what they are trying to do there in your town or in your city. The local church is key to world evangelism. 70% to 90% of our long-term workers, thousand or so, across the world, they were sent out by their local church.

Just as we see or we're going to see in this passage of Scripture. This was the church at Antioch. This is 2,000 years ago when the church was just beginning.

I believe it is a great mistake in America, forgive me, that our churches have overemphasized buildings and has put billions and billions and billions and billions into buildings. I'm not saying you can't have a building, but it becomes too much of a focus. And sometimes during the building program, the mission

budget is about 3%.

Oswald J. Smith, when he put that tremendous building up there in Toronto, which is there to this day, a dynamic, continued growing church, now under the leadership of Charles Price of Britain that took their missions conference a couple of years ago. During the time of building, he kept the budget for missions at 50%. No wonder People's Church has been a real marathon, long-distance church for Toronto and for global missions.

And I believe there's a lack of balance, and I believe this passage will really help us face that challenge. So the local church is so important. The local church has to have a vision.

The local church has to be obedient to the Word of God. I know paying the pastor's salary is incredibly important. And I'm sure here in New England, where your churches are small, pastors are not getting huge salaries.

But you need to know that in this country, in the big churches, less than a hundred grand, these guys will not take the church. And if you think the average pastor in these big churches has a real passion for global missions and is really living in obedience to the Word of God, you've not been around very much. I've been ministering in almost every state, including Hawaii and Alaska, and I've been asking questions, and I've been doing my research.

And the state, even of many of these mega churches, it really scares me. Because we're caught up with numbers, we're caught up with growing bigger and bigger barns, when there's even a scripture warning us against the danger of just building bigger barns. And do you know what's now the case for many big churches across America? They've had immorality, they've had splits, there's big churches all over the country, some of them built only 20 years ago, they are now half empty.

I remember one in a particular city, shortly after they got this huge multi-million dollar complex up, they had a split, then another split, they've never once filled the church, except when they have some kind of concert and bring in people from other places. Now God is sovereign, He's still working there. I love those people, don't misunderstand me, but surely there's a better way.

Surely there's a better way. And I believe going back to the Book of Acts, going back to the Scriptures, is the better way. So these five people are gathered in worship.

There's no indication that there's any church building here. They were probably meeting in a home, maybe they were meeting in some kind of other kind of building. Again, that's not saying we should never have buildings.

But it is interesting, even when there are buildings, like David Young-hee Cho's church in Seoul, Korea, that I was telling you about, when God begins to work, they can't fit all those people in the building. And David Young-hee Cho, the pastor of the biggest church in the world, has warned other leaders about the building mania. And he says, don't build a church in connection with a number of people that are going at any one time.

People, these are my words now, people are fickle. They come, they go. And so they have their congregations spread out across Seoul in house groups.

700,000 people involved. Only 12,000 can fit in the church. So they have a lot of services and maybe have a hundred thousand people on any one Sunday.

It is amazing what God has done across the world. That's just, that's just a little sideline. But I don't think we, we thank the Lord enough for what he has done around the world in the last 50 or 100 years, as the church has grown and as millions and millions of people have been brought to a knowledge of Jesus.

The second word is one of my favorite words in the whole of the Bible, worship. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. So we find these people gathering in worship.

We know today there's a lot of controversy concerning worship. Is it traditional music we use in the organ? Is it contemporary music? Is it guitars? I think one of the most ridiculous arguments going on in the United States is the arguments over, over music. But it's the way we are as human beings.

I have seen God using all kinds of music and a lot of people worship even without music. There's a church in Scotland called the We Free Church. They don't allow the music.

They still worship. They sing the Psalms. God leads different people in different ways, different denominations, have different emphasis, and I don't want to get into that.

But I know that worship is not just something we do when we have great music. Worship is also something we do when we're on our own, in our homes, when we're having our own time of worship and praise. And I think it's just such a beautiful picture that while these people were worshiping the Lord, God spoke into that situation.

I want to ask, as you worship God, are you ready for God to speak into your situation, as He spoke to Paul and Barnabas? I think it was A.W. Tozer who said that worship is the missing jewel of the evangelical church. You may want to pick up that book this evening. The third word is, of course, more than a word.

It's a person, the Holy Spirit. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said. We have to ask ourselves, is the Holy Spirit still doing this? Of course He is.

This is not a situation where the Holy Spirit is adding to the Bible. It's nothing to do with that. This is a situation where the Holy Spirit is speaking to Paul and Barnabas.

I don't know exactly how He did this. Through the whole group, through the mind, I have had this experience hundreds of times. It was in a small room in Bolton, Lancashire, a converted pub, a bar that we converted into a Christian bookstore.

I was praying with a group of people. We had 120 vehicles crisscrossing the world out to India, reaching millions of people. I had been thinking about the fact that so much of the globe was blue.

It's water, water, water, wherever you look. And I thought, we can't get the job done with just vehicles. We need a ship.

Two summers before, I had to take a hundred old vehicles. It might have been a few of them already on the continent. It's a long time ago.

But about a hundred old vehicles across the English Channel. How do we get them across the English Channel? We didn't have the tunnel like we have now. We had to use a ferry.

When I first went to Europe, I went on the Queen Elizabeth. And so the seed of ships was in my mind. And it's in that little room, the Holy Spirit, I believe, I didn't say at that time, whoa, the Holy Spirit said this.

No, I just shared it in a very down-to-earth human way that I sensed maybe God wants us to have a ship. And I shared that the next day with leaders. And we waited on God for a couple of years before we ever got that first ship, which wasn't seen very much in this more recent video, because that ship is on the rocks there off the coast of South America.

In a very real way, I sensed God speaking to me to go to India, to take my whole family and move to India when we had never planned on that. Through God's providence, we ended up in Nepal. I don't remember the Holy Spirit speaking to me so much about that.

That happened when I no longer could get into India. I thought maybe Thailand was the place to live. So we were living in Thailand.

That wasn't working out. Some open doors were there in Kathmandu, just north of India. Indians could come there for leadership training.

They didn't need any kind of a visa. And soon we were in Kathmandu with three children and our kids were going to a Nepali school. God leads different people in different ways.

It doesn't always happen like this, but it sometimes happens like this. When did you last have a prayer meeting like this in your church, in which in the middle of the meeting or at the end, someone says, well, I sense the Holy Spirit is directing me and maybe someone else, maybe your wife, to go out into global missions, to at least start thinking about it, praying about it. The Holy Spirit is the chief executive officer of all missionary work.

I believe it grieves the Holy Spirit that we do not, in many of our more conservative churches, which is my background, that we don't emphasize the ministry of the Holy Spirit. I know that some people get into very extreme things and they say the Holy Spirit is doing that, and that can be dangerous. I've written about that in some of my books, but I believe there's an equal danger we overreact to that.

We overreact to extremism and we end up in the deep freeze of dead orthodoxy and traditionalism, and then we can't hardly accomplish anything except argue over various doctrinal tidbits. May God give us a greater sense of the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is also mentioned again in verse four.

Two of them sent on their way by who? The Holy Spirit. Now that's interesting because in verse three it says they placed their hands on them and they sent them on their way. So well, which is it? I mean, is it the church laying hands on them, sending them away? Have you ever been in that kind of church service? In England we call that a valedictory service.

That's a new word for me when I arrived in England. A valedictory service. It means a commissioning service.

And I've had the joy in being at many of them. And that's what happened here. They laid hands on them and they sent them off, but they realized behind it all was the Holy Spirit.

Isn't that exciting? I want to ask you, are you filled and directed by the Holy Spirit on a day-by-day basis? It's a normal Christian life. D.L. Moody used to emphasize the need to be filled again and again. You remember D.L. Moody? A little bit before our day, wasn't he an amazing character? Wasn't he originally from New England? D.L. Moody.

Do you know what a secular encyclopedia says about D.L. Moody? Overweight American evangelist who depopulated hell by two million souls. Not bad. He would have looked really good in this global jacket, right? This doesn't look so good on me.

It sort of looks just hangs there. It's better on, you know, global people. And I'm going to give one to Moody if I can get near him when I get to heaven.

He'll surely look like a great global person. Moody would often talk about the need to be filled again and again. And one day a woman supposedly, as the story goes, said, Mr. Moody, why do you keep going on about being filled again and again? And Moody looked her in the eye and he said, Madam, because I leak.

You know, that really ministers to me because I feel at times I'm such a leaky Christian. Now, one minute I can just feel so filled and God seems to be working. And then the next minute I just, it just seems to be God.

And I don't really want to pray. I certainly don't want to witness to anybody. Is that your favorite thing? You know, witnessing to strangers? Your favorite thing? It's not my favorite thing, I can assure you.

I'd rather bury my head in a book or dictate a letter to a friend. But again and again, I think of the words of that book by John Stott, my guilty silence. And it helps me open my mouth and share something in my faith, sometimes even to a total stranger.

So the Holy Spirit wants to fill us again and again. The Holy Spirit wants to send out workers. And I believe this needs to be reemphasized in our churches.

The fourth word is the word prayer. Worship isn't the same as prayer. Do you know that in some churches I minister where they have 30, 40 minutes of worship and some of it is really good worship.

A little research shows that they hardly spend any time in prayer at all. In fact, as I've talked to some of the young people involved, they actually don't even know what intercessory prayer is. How Satan loves to get us lopsided.

How Satan loves to just get us into one thing or allow us to go into one thing. I don't understand how it works. And we get stuck there.

I believe a lot of God's people are stuck. Do you have a lot of snow here in New Hampshire at any time of the year? Have you ever got your car stuck in the snow? It's not a fun thing is it? I've had the experience in snow, in mud, because we have a lot of vehicles, you know, and I believe with all my heart a lot of churches are stuck. They're in a rut.

And I believe God has lately been using Rick Warren's purpose-driven life and purpose-driven church to stir up some churches. It's not automatic. It's not going to always happen in New Hampshire like it happened in California, but it's worth trying.

Praise God for tens of thousands of churches that have had the 40 days of purpose and have begun to try to think some new thoughts and take some steps of faith. And it's being bathed, generally it's being bathed in prayer. So look again in verse 3. So after they had fasted and prayed, first they were worshipping and fasting and then they were fasting and praying.

That might be our eighth word, the most unpleasant word in the whole passage. Ah, fasting. Your favorite thing, right? If it puts you off, why not try sometime just to miss one meal? That's how I started.

Just one meal. Just to miss that and have that time in prayer. Some people can't do that because of their health.

My own wife's health situation, one meal can throw her metabolism off. So, you know, we don't recommend that. But most people, it won't do them any harm.

Some of the greatest decisions in the history of our work in those early days, including when we actually bought that first ship, our group was gathered together at a conference waiting on Him in prayer and fasting. And so we have that fourth word, the word prayer. The fifth word is a little tiny word that just jumps right out of the passage.

But before we look at that, just turn back to chapter 12. Just a little challenge about prayer. I remember when I was a student at Moody, at one of the prayer meetings after supper, a guy from Ireland stood up and he preached on Acts 12.

And he read verse 5. Peter was kept in prison, but he put a big emphasis on the but. But the church was earnestly praying to God for him. There's the picture of the New Testament church earnestly praying, earnestly praying.

He was soon out of prison. And then look at verse 12, when it had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying the prayer meeting. It's biblical.

It's not a tradition that was developed in the early colonial days of America. It's not a tradition that started in a church in London. The prayer meeting goes back to the book of Acts.

And when you get in your church prayer meeting or any other prayer meeting, you're following the line of the New Testament church and what the Holy Spirit was doing. I've been reading lately about the whole emerging church movement. This is going to be one of the biggest tidal waves that hits the American church in the next five years.

There's already a huge theological book written about the emerging church. I'm reading it right now. People like Brian McLaren.

And I tell you, some of the most wild stuff is being said about the church and worship and theology that's ever been said. And the emerging church is not really a movement yet. It's just happening in all different ways.

Some of it is good. Some of it doesn't look good at all. The theologian Don Carson, who wrote this book I'm reading right now, is warning that some of it looks like, again, departure from the Word of God.

And when I have the opportunity and meet some of the people in the emerging church movement, I'm going to ask them simple questions. Is there a place for intercessory prayer and prayer meetings like I read about in Acts 12? Is there a place for this in this emerging church movement? And their answer will determine my evaluation. And we need a lot of discernment today, as so many different things are going on.

Again, there are some people who are anti-everything new. Beware of those people. Everything new can't possibly be wrong.

But we need discernment to know what is from man and what is from God. What is mixed? I said some years ago, I don't think there's a straight drink left in the body of Christ. Everything seems to be a cocktail.

Calvinists with Arminian streaks, Methodists who behave like Pentecostals, Baptists who look like Anglicans. There's not a straight drink left in the body of Christ. There just seem to be so many Holy Ghost cocktails.

And when you meet some of these people, it's actually quite frightening how a movement like Operation Mobilization has managed to bring so many of them together on a ship is beyond really my own understanding. I believe it's only God that could do it. And so prayer is so incredibly important.

And then that fifth word is that word send. There in verse 3, placed hands on them and sent them off. Probably tomorrow, we're going to look at that great sending passage from Isaiah 6, here am I, send me.

I've already referred to Romans 10, 15. How will they go? How will they preach unless they are sent? I normally have a book on my table called *Serving As Senders*. I guess we need to reorder some written by Neil Parolo.

I'd be happy to send that book to you as a gift because it shows that the ministry of sending missionaries is a serious ministry. It's a serious ministry. In fact, I believe it's harder to find the senders than the goers.

And I've been involved in looking for people for 50 years. So many young people that were on OM short-term, they wanted to go long-term. It didn't happen.

They couldn't find the senders. In a sense, it's like an IndyCar race or a Grand Prix. For every one in the car, you need 50 on the team.

And so for every missionary we send, especially a family, you need a lot of people on the team. I was thinking maybe the Lord wanted me to have this Sunday free. I'm traveling up to Owl's End.

I thought Sunday, I'll just have my, have it free, go for a walk and worship. And then the Holy Spirit spoke to me. Phone Gary Dean.

Phone Gary Dean in Sri Lanka. See if one of his supporting churches last minute will have George Verwer speak. He lives down by Wells and Dover.

The pastor called me from vacation this morning. Would you speak in my church? Gary Dean's wife's mother, she's already over the moon, wants us to park the motor home in her front, in her front yard. And so we're going, instead of Owl's Head Direct, we're going via Wells in order to have time with a supporting church.

Because these churches are so important. And they've been standing with Gary and Sue, a small number of people in that area, keeping this couple out on the ship now in Sri Lanka for 30 or 40 years. And so for me to go there just to thank them and share something from the word of God, I think that's better than me having another walk in the woods.

By the way, the polar bear caves is great. That was this afternoon's recreation. But I had a large lady ahead of me.

That is not a walk for large people. In fact, they're so clever here in New Hampshire. Every cave has a bypass.

You don't have to go in the caves. You go on up there as long as you can climb uphill. It's all uphill.

Except when you go downhill, it's all uphill. And each cave is a bypass. But of course, I went in through the caves and this one lady in front of me, I thought she's going to get stuck.

It has all kinds of warnings. But you know, people just go and praise the Lord she got through. And I don't think she'll be doing that again.

I'd appreciate your prayers just for these few extra days after we leave here on Saturday, that they may really count for eternity. For spending time with individuals I esteem equal as spending time teaching or preaching from the pulpit. Yes, we need senders.

And I know some of you here this evening, you're already senders. You're already giving. Some of you have even sacrificed to give to missions.

And I just want to say thank you on behalf of the body of Christ, behalf of those of us who are missionaries. Thank you for your commitment, for your prayers. I think of the words of Jesus as the Father sent me.

So send I you. Let me, give me the privilege of sending you as a gift that book, *Serving as Senders*, by Neil Pirolo. And then the sixth word.

The sixth word is there in verse seven. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God. Last night we looked at seven people laying by the side of the road.

The children at risk, the abused, mistreated women. The extreme poor, the victim of HIV and AIDS, the victim of abortion, the person without water, the planet itself. But one thing I tried to bring out at the end of that message is that with all the various ministries we have to people's physical, mental, and emotional needs, we must keep winning men and women to Jesus.

And there it is again in this missionary picture passage. They went and proclaimed the word of God. They proclaimed the word of God.

And then my seventh word is that little word helper there in the end phrase of that verse. John was with them as their helper. When's the last time you went to someone in your church who's working behind the scenes maybe even here at this conference and affirm them for what they're doing.

As I look back at my life, even with my own children, I made a lot of mistakes. But as I look back, the failure to affirm people more. I was known eventually as a person that does encourage and affirm people.

But as I look more honestly, there are many people that I missed. And with my own children, I did not affirm them enough. I read some fantastic material on this, but it was a little bit late.

Now I'm trying to practice it with my grandchildren. You know, everything is so much easier to read about than to practice. And many of you found the difference between what you hear and what you read and what you feel and what you do.

Do you know what C.S. Lewis said? This great writer. He said, we have the tendency to think, but not to act. We have the tendency to feel.

We do feel things and not to act. And he said something I'll never forget. If we continue feeling and thinking without acting, someday we will be unable to act.

I call that, and I first used that term in Urbana in 1967, one of the youngest speakers to ever speak at Urbana, and I called it spiritual schizophrenia. And my book, *Hunger for Reality*, which I never wanted to write, grew out of that concept. That on Sunday we're one person, and on Wednesday or next Saturday, we're a totally different person.

What a deadly disease. Unable to really see transformation. Unable to really act on what we say we believe.

And I'm praying, I'm praying that as an older person, that spiritual schizophrenia will not come upon my soul. And sometimes my own behavior, little things, little things around the home, my own behavior frightens me. That's why I keep running back to the cross.

I keep running back to the cross, back to Jesus for forgiveness and grace. You ever heard the name of R.T. Kendall? R.T. Kendall was that Southern Baptist that had to fill the shoes of Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones in Westminster Chapel, an American. Oh, the Brits know how to crucify Americans, I can assure you.

They're professionally trained at Cambridge and Oxford. And R.T. Kendall stepped into that great pulpit, and the church never grew in a huge way under him. And I know he battled with a lot of discouragement, but he's a man that walked with God.

And just before he left London and moved back to Florida, I heard R.T. Kendall, by the way, who ministered at least three times to Arafat, the gospel, before he died. Amazing, absolutely amazing. And R.T. Kendall stood at this meeting in London, and now he's written a book about it.

I'm sure you can find it in a bookstore. He spoke about forgiveness and the new lessons that God was teaching him about forgiveness. It's powerful.

I want to ask you, and I'm going to bring this to a close. We're on a little bit of a tangent here, but I believe it's from the Holy Spirit. Is there anybody anywhere you have not forgiven? Would you forgive them tonight because of Jesus? It doesn't mean you're going to become emotionally over it.

It doesn't mean you're necessarily going to have some, you know, fantastic relationship with them in the future. There are many factors in relationship and partnership, but at least before God you can say, I have forgiven this person. It may be one of your own children.

It may be a pastor who did something wrong to you. It may be something even in your childhood. Letting go of things that hurt you, letting go of those knives that are in your back, of deep hurts that have come

maybe even from in the family is a beautiful, exhilarating experience that can almost be like revival.

And by God's grace, I learned this as a young Christian and have never gone to bed with anything against anybody. And you can know a character like me has a lot of critics and a lot of people who spoke against me behind my back in very strong terms. I've never been able to hold anything against any of them.

God is sovereign. And if they knew some of my bigger struggles, maybe they'd have even more things to say about me. So praise the Lord.

Let's press on and not get caught in any form of unforgiveness. We see in this passage that being a helper is important. And when you get back to your church or even to non-Christians in your town who work in the post office or maybe pick up your garbage or who help you in some way or the other, would you affirm them more? Would you talk to them about, if they're Christians, the ministry of helps.

If they're not Christians, of course, they're being helped. And we can't exactly say it's a ministry if they don't know Jesus, but you can still thank them. And I believe to some degree there's a danger in America that we're going to become a nation of unthankful people.

I am so shocked at what some people say against our president, whether you're Democrat or Republican or whatever. According to the word of God, we are to respect the leaders of our government. And that this president recently was invited to speak at this Calvin College in Michigan.

What a privilege for a little college, a little college, you know, thousands of colleges in our country. Why should President Bush go to Calvin College? Give me a break. And so he honors this college and he goes and speaks at their commencement.

And lo and behold, certain types of people start a campaign, a bad mouth campaign against him and sign a petition against him. It's a sad situation when we cannot even respect our own president. Of course, we can agree to disagree.

My wife and I have been agreeing to disagree for 45 years. That's no big deal. Who's going to agree with everything that the president says? If he listened to his tapes from five years ago, he wouldn't agree either.

But we can respect people. We can affirm people. We can pray for people.

We can honor people. And we need more of that in our country. We need more of that in our planet.

We need to write more letters. We need to send more emails. We need to make more phone calls affirming, encouraging, showing people that we care.

And the whole planet and the whole nation and every church will become a much better place for it. And then, when people get together and pray, we'll see things, I believe, as we see here in the Book of Acts. Let us pray.

Our God and Father, we thank you. We thank you for the reality of your Holy Spirit that we see roaring across the Book of Acts. We thank you, O God, that you know everything about us and you love us still.

You know our struggles and our weaknesses. You know our attitudes and sometimes our wrong attitudes, and yet you still love us and you forgive us. And you're wanting to take us further on in our walk with you.

And, Lord, I thank you for many people here who have the gift of helps. I thank you for those with the gift of help for keeping this whole conference center going. Hidden people.

Some of them might be discouraged right now. And help us to minister to them and to be an encouragement to them. And guard our tongues as quickly, sometimes in pressurized situations, we react and say things that are unkind and we feel bad about it later on.

O Lord, give us a crucified tongue that we may speak beauty and peace and love and grace. And we would pray for our country in this tremendous time of people talking about blue and red and of filibuster and of anxiety and war. And we pray that we may have greater discernment and wisdom and grace to be your people as well as citizens of this country.

For we ask in Jesus name. Amen.

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