

# THE BODY

HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT BUILDS HIS CHURCH

WEEK 10

## POWER FOR THE COMMON GOOD

*In God's kingdom, greater love seeks greater power for the greater good.*

### BECOMING LIKE JESUS

In following Jesus, we learn that greater love desires greater power for the greater good. We should crave this spiritual increased power not for sensationalism, but for the health of our church family. God's love guides his power in his family. And, when we seek the gifts of the Spirit, we are seeking to "get all God has to give" so that we can strengthen our church family and redeem the world through his love of the church.

#### John 4:16-19

*(Jesus) told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." The woman said, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet."*

This appears to be a prophetic word given to Jesus by the Spirit. The text doesn't indicate that he heard it through the grapevine, so we conclude Jesus was given a word of knowledge, delivered as a spiritual gift to strengthen, encourage and comfort this woman. How do you think this supernatural insight struck her? Reading the rest of the story, what impact did this prophetic statement have on her and those around her?

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### WHAT IS PROPHECY?

Before we read Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 14, it helps to clear up a common misunderstanding. Prophecy in the New Testament is not primarily about predicting the future. It is a Spirit-given declaration. Sam Storms defines it this way, "*Prophecy is simply a human report of a divine revelation. It is sharing in your own words what God has spontaneously brought to mind—a clear and compelling thought or image that arrives suddenly with a deep sense that it is from God.*"

You might call prophecy a "lightning gift"— an authentic, spontaneous burst of the Spirit's power that interrupts our normal routine to bring more of heaven to earth. While a God-given prophetic word will never contradict Scripture, it can bring the truth of the Scripture to application in an unexpected and powerful way.

**SCRIPTURE**

**1 CORINTHIANS 14:1-12** | Paraphrase these verses, asking God to help you better understand them.

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**YOUR LIFE**

Paul says to “eagerly desire” the gifts that build up the church — and singles out prophecy as one worth pursuing. How accessible does that seem to you? In what ways does it feel like it’s for others and not for you?

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Can you think of a time when someone spoke a word to you — an encouragement, an insight, a truth you needed to hear — that felt like it came from beyond them; like it might actually be from God? How did that impact you?

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Have you ever sensed that God wanted you to say something to someone, but you held back? Describe that and what stopped you. What’s the worst (and best) thing that might have happened if you had spoken it?

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Learning to partner with the Spirit is like learning to snow ski; you can’t start well without crashing a lot. If you are unwilling to look a bit silly, you will likely limit yourself to gifts that make you feel less vulnerable.

Describe the risk steps you've taken -- and others you've avoided -- in this process of functioning in such prophetic gifts. In what ways have you succeeded / stumbled in this area?

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**YOUR IDENTITY**

How does your false identity (old self) get in the way of operating in the gifts that manifest the presence of God in ways that seem dramatically supernatural? Child-like faith is required for extravagant steps of trust. What is the most recent step of such big-leap, simple faith that you've taken in this area of spiritual gifts? How does a "timid" spirit prevent you from fanning into flame the gifts God has given you?

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Paul's argument in this passage is that the gifts are not first for our personal benefit — they are first for the building up of others. How does living from your true identity — secure, loved, and gifted by the Spirit — free you to use your gifts to strengthen God's family?

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**1 Thessalonians 5:19-22** *"Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt<sup>21</sup> but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil."* Why do you think people often dislike prophecy? How are we instructed to manage it?

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**HOME & WORK**

Who in your life needs to be strengthened, encouraged, or comforted? Ask God what they need from Him right now. Ask God what he has for them right now. Write down what comes to mind, and pray about sending it to this person. You could even start the note by saying, "I asked God these two questions on your behalf. Here's what came to my mind. I can't guarantee it was from God, but it might be. If nothing else, I want you to know that I care about you and I pray for you."

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What do you need from the Holy Spirit right now? Do you have a power-seeking aspect to your prayer life? Stop for a moment and ask Him, "Spirit, what is the power and gifting you want to increase in my life right now?" If nothing comes to mind, just sit quietly. Do this a couple of times, each time asking the Lord to help you hear whatever He may have to say.

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**SERMON NOTES**

**Lord, what do You have for me in this sermon?**

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**Lord, what question should I bring to my group from this sermon?**

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**PRAYER LITURGY**

**Lead**            *Lord, You graciously speak to your people.*

**Group**           *Holy Spirit, may we hear You speak*

**Lead**            *Lord, Your love seeks your power*

**Group**           *Holy Spirit, empower us today*

**Lead**            *May our words strengthen, encourage, and comfort*

**All**              *Let it be, for the common good.*