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Presentation Transcript
True Spirituality 13 – Freedom in Christ
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Well today we continue our series on *True Spirituality*. This is the thirteenth installment and the subject is *Freedom in Christ*. You'll remember that the overarching premise of this entire series is that there are a number of things that God considers extremely important and we tend *not* to. So the point of it is to put the spotlight on these things – these issues that are important to God – so that we can grow into the mind of Christ and become more spiritually minded ourselves.

Of course, we're on number thirteen and I'm only planning one more, so I'm not making the claim that this series, when it's done, is going to be complete. That's because I suspect that I don't know all the things that need to be covered. But all we can do is our best, even if we know we will not succeed in perfection. And we'll just allow God to make up the difference.

The Apostle Paul, in the 12th chapter of Hebrews, makes a very interesting statement. He says in verse 18 of Hebrews 12:

Heb. 12:18 – *You have not come to a mountain that can be touched, and that is burning with fire to darkness, gloom and storm. He's comparing the church to Mount Sinai. He says, You have not come to a trumpet blast – verse 19 – or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded. Then he quotes, If even an animal touches the mountain it must be stoned. The sight was so terrifying that even Moses said, "I am trembling with fear." But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirit of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkling blood that speaks better words than the blood of Abel. See to it that you do not refuse Him who speaks. If they did not escape who refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we if we turn away from Him that warns us from heaven.*

So you see the analogy here, right? The church in the wilderness and the church today. They were warned and they didn't obey. And we all know what happened to them. And then he says, in verse 26:

V-26 – *At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised once more, “I will shake not only the earth, but also the heavens.” The words once more indicate the removing of what can be shaken – that is, created things – so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe. For our God is a consuming fire.*

Paul's point here is that none of us ought to take lightly what we've been given – the sacrifice of Jesus Christ or the Church of God. It's not today Mount Sinai, but Mount Zion that we stand before. It's not a physical city called Jerusalem, but it's called Jerusalem Above. We're warned not to create a church in our own image – or as we would like it – but to live the way Christ created the church. We should live in it the way it was given by Christ.

That was the problem the Christians, who had been Pharisees, were having already. They wanted to make the church the way they thought it should be – like they were used to. And they didn't understand that God had made a new agreement with all people. They wanted a church that followed the Old Covenant with all its laws. They wanted the Old Covenant rules to be put into the New Covenant church. Paul said that they were in a kind of bondage that they didn't need to be under. Let's look at one of the places where he talks about this in Galatians 4, verse 21. He said:

Gal. 4:21 – *Tell me, you that desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons – the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman. The free woman would be Sarah, right? But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh, but he of the free woman was born by promise. So the bondwoman was younger and she was able to have a child naturally, but God had to perform a miracle for Sarah to have a child. Right? It was by promise, which things are an allegory. For these are the two covenants, the one from Mount Sinai, which genders bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answers to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.*

You know, that must have been a really cold analogy to lay on the Jews of that day, because he compared them to Hagar, a Gentile woman.

So what does it mean, “Jerusalem above is free”? Well, in the context here, Paul is talking about the New Covenant that provides freedom from the oral law the Jews were under and also from that Mosaic Covenant. He's *not* talking about the Ten Commandments because they were in force way before Moses, and they are still in force today. They define what sin is and what love is. They define the mind of Christ. And the fact that sin and law and Christ are still with us proves that the Law of God is with us

still. But in context he's talking about freedom from the parts of the law that are no longer a part of the New Covenant.

But I want you to think with me for a minute. He said, "Jerusalem above is free." Don't you get the sense that he's talking about a lot more than simply freedom from the Old Covenant and the oral law? Isn't that just sort of an overarching principle that he is referencing to prove his point? So what is the nature of that overarching principle? Well, the church of the Living God – the one that we better be pretty seriously afraid to change – is characterized by freedom. And one easy way to start getting a handle on that – what it means – would be to simply look at the other places where Jesus and Paul and the other apostles talked about freedom in Christ. So let's do that. Let's go to Romans 8, and verse 20.

Rom. 8:20 – *For the creation, he says, was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.* So that's talking about freedom from death and decay – no longer physical, but turned to spirit.

Let's look at another one in Galatians 2:2. He said:

Gal. 2:2 – *I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I had preached among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to them that seemed to be leaders for fear that I had run my race in vain. Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek, because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom that we have in Jesus Christ and to make us slaves.* So there's another reference to the oral law.

So, freedom from death and freedom from the laws of the Jews.... It's really interesting – just as an aside – to see how Paul viewed the other apostles, isn't it? He wasn't under their authority. He wanted to cooperate with them. The sense is that he kind of saw them as equals. He was free of their control – didn't ask their permission, but told them what he was going to do – wanted to cooperate.

Let's look at one more. Galatians 5:13.

Gal. 5:13 – *You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature. Rather serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: love your neighbor as yourself.* So, in this context we see Paul talking about a greater freedom that encompasses our right to *choose* how we're going to live our lives and how we will relate to other people. That way is called the way of love. That's a much broader application than a reference to freedom from death or from the oral law. He's talking about our freedom to live out the law! And to live out our Christianity as a light to other people – to reach out to others, to take care of other people, to follow the impulses of the Holy Spirit. To be a Christian is to be free to do those things.

Let's talk some more about the church. We're talking about the church being free. But let's try to understand a little bit about how the church is structured. We know that God the Father is over all. Right? He is over all. And we know that Jesus Christ is less authoritative and less powerful than God the Father. God the Father is the supreme authority and Jesus Christ is next. We know that we are less powerful than Christ, don't we?

Now, because of this, some people believe that that church should be seen like a pyramid, with God the Father at the top, and then Christ underneath, and all the rest of us down below that – you know, the apostles and then us. But did you know that that is not a godly representation of the church? There's no pyramid in there! In the New Testament or the Old. That pyramid is how *man* organizes everything from school systems to bridge clubs to churches! Not God.

So what *is* the picture of the church in the New Testament? Let's look in Ephesians 2, verse 17. It says:

Eph. 2:17 – *He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ Himself as the chief cornerstone. In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in Him you, too, are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit.*

So one of the pictures that we're given by God to help us understand the church is a temple. And Jesus Christ is *not* at the top. He's at the corner. He's supporting everything up above. We hear people are called "*pillars* in the temple of my God." But Jesus Christ and the apostles are in the foundation – in the *foundation*. The prophets, apostles and Christ are not the capstone of a pyramid, but the *foundation* that holds everything else up. They support it.

Let's look at Luke 22 and understand how this all works. Luke 22:23. It says:

Lk. 22:23 – *They began to question – this is the disciples who later became the apostles – among themselves which of them it be who would do this. And they're talking about being in charge. So they've got the pyramid in mind. And Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them. And those who exercise authority over them call themselves benefactors." We all understand that, don't we? Like the kings that were present – emperor of Rome and all that. They were *in charge*. They were at the top of the heap. And He said, "But you" – verse 26 – "are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves."*

If you walk into Manhattan and you look at some big, huge skyscraper – let's say some big office building that's owned by a company – who's office is going to be at the top?

And who's on the first floor? The youngest, the secretaries. And they've got the slower computers, and the less cushy chairs, and the skinnier, smaller desks. And the guys at the top have all the fancy stuff and people wait on them hand and foot. So Jesus asked this question:

V-27 – *“For who is greater, the one who is at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table?”* The one on the top floor? Of course! *“But I am among you as one who serves.”* I'm down here on the bottom, holding everything up. *“You are those who stood by Me in My trial. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as My Father conferred one on Me, so that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes.”*

So He's explaining for them here that they had the wrong idea about how the kingdom of God is organized. It's not like the governments that they were familiar with, which were hierarchical – which had kings who ruled *over* people – thinking that they knew better than everybody else and they could do whatever they wanted. And he also tells them that there's going to be a structure in the kingdom. And they *are* going to have positions and roles to play in the kingdom. They are going to be judges. But it's not the kind of role where they will be domineering over other people.

If somebody's down below, and they're a leader, it's the kind of leadership where the leaders have their hands dirty doing the work, taking care of those people that are in their organization that they serve.

I heard that the president of Southwest Airlines, every Thanksgiving morning, flies somewhere and loads bags, because that is the heaviest luggage day of the year for Southwest Airlines. And so he gets right in there with the rest of the troops and loads bags. Now, he doesn't do that all the time because he has another role to play in that company. But he doesn't feel that he's above doing that!

Another thing that I heard about Southwest Airlines that was really interesting was that they have a big corporate office and the people that sit up on the top floor decided that it would be nice to give the people that work there a health spa – you know, where they could work out at lunch time. And you know, the people that work in that building voted it down because they said, “It wouldn't be fair for us to have that if the other people that work for Southwest Airlines don't have that, too.” And they couldn't provide that at every airport for all their employees, so they didn't have it. All on the same even level.

So let's ask this question then. *How* are the leaders of the church to take care of the people that are in the organization that aren't necessarily the foundational pieces? And *why* are they to take care of them? Well, I suppose if the only picture of the church were a temple, we still would not know all that we need to know. But God paints us *another* picture. Let's go to 1 Corinthians 12:12. It says:

1 Cor. 12:12 – *The body is a unit – so now we're going to see that the church is also like a body – though it is made up of many parts, and though all its parts are many, they form*

one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether we're Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – you see the leveling that he's talking about? Jews or Greeks, slaves or free. Jews used to hate Gentiles and now they're all on the same playing field. And we were all given the one Spirit to drink. And now the body is not made up of one part, but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong in the body," it would not, for that reason, cease to be a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I'm not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not, for that reason, cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? And if the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact, God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them just as He wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? It would just be a big nose! Or a big brain – lying there quivering, you know. Or a big foot. That doesn't make sense. What would happen if the brain would die, the foot would die, the nose would die? They can't exist apart from the body, right? All together. All made out of the same stuff.

V-21 - *The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you." Verse 21. And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you." On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable. And the parts that we think are less honorable, we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body, and has given greater honor to the parts that lack it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. Equal concern for each other. Equal respect. Equal care. And yet different roles. Nobody better than any other.*

You know, it's really interesting how that works. In our little study group, we all take turns facilitating our weekly Bible study. And we're all learning how to do that by practice. When it's Kelly's turn to facilitate, he's the boss and we follow his lead. He goes around the table and tells us it's our turn. And we try not to speak out of turn. When it's Tanya's turn, she's the boss that week and we follow her lead. And we get to play a role. Each of us gets to be the boss of the Bible study. Right? But it's a role of service. Because somebody has to do it. You can't just have a bunch of people sit down and start jabbering. Somebody kind of needs to lay it out and make up the questions. Our little study group even does this when I'm gone. And they still learn. They don't get into arguments. They're spiritually mature. Peace reigns and Christ presides. Somebody has to take the lead so that we can have something happen. And that's the same with the church, too. But notice how different the church is than the way a business is organized, for example.

Then he says in verse 26:

V-26 – *If one part suffers, every part suffers with it. If one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church, God has appointed, first of all, apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others,*

those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? See everybody has a role. Nobody does everything. And in the body of Christ, there are not people who are spiritually superior to others, but those who play roles to serve the rest of the body, so that the body can do its work. And every part is to respect the Holy Spirit in every other part, because we were all baptized into one Spirit, right? And we're to take care of each other. If the foot doesn't walk the sore hand to the doctor, the foot's going to get blood poisoning in the long run. So we all have to take care of each other.

But why? What is the *purpose* that? Let's go to Ephesians 4:4.

Eph. 4:4 – *There is one body, and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all and in all. But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. That is why it says – and he quotes the Old Testament – “When He ascended on high, He led captives in His train and gave gifts to men.” It was He who gave – I'm in verse 11 now – some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, some to be pastors and teachers. So those are the gifts he's talking about – some of them. There are others, but we're not going to look at all of them.*

And what is the purpose of giving some people the role to be an apostle, or a prophet, or a teacher, or a pastor?

V-12 – *To prepare God's people for the work of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith, and in the knowledge of the Son of God, and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.* Did you catch it? The purpose for ministers and pastors and teachers is to prepare God's people for works of service! It's *not* to do all the work themselves. It's to prepare *everybody* in the body. That's why Christ is the chief cornerstone and the apostles are in that foundation with Him. That's what they're holding up. They're supporting the training of the church, so that it can do its work. He says:

V-14 – *Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching, and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the head – that is, Christ. For from Him the whole body joined and held together by every supporting ligament grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work.* So you see something there? If you want to become spiritually mature, if you want to grow up, you *have* to be doing your work. And the ministry is responsible to teach you what to do – to help you figure out what your gifts are, and to help you use those gifts to do the work that God has called you to do.

So let's digest what we just read a little bit. There are parts of the body that have leadership roles – apostles, pastors, teachers – and what are they to do? What role do they play? Are they to set themselves up over others? No. Just like Jesus said, their role is to

serve – and specifically to teach people how to use the gifts that God has given them – to *equip* the members of the body for works of service.

You know, in North America and Europe the church used to be like that. But it soon became a church where they hired ministers to do the work so that the members didn't have to do as much. So they became spectators – spectator Christians. It's taken a couple of hundred years, but that has essentially killed the church in North America. And the vibrant Christians you find now are in small groups, where they *have* to be involved in doing the work of the church.

So the job of the ministry is to help people learn to do what God called them to do. And pray, pay and obey are *not* the three gifts that are mentioned in scripture.

One time a woman came to me at church and proposed that she and some other people form a service group. And I can't honestly remember what it was for. I think it had something to do with the kids. There was the emergence of her gift right there. She had an urge to *do* something to help the children in the church, I believe it was. She was listening to God talking to her. You know what I said? I said, "It sounds good, but I doubt headquarters would allow it." And that's all the further I thought about it. See, right there, I was not being the kind of minister that God says a minister ought to be in the New Testament. And I have had to repent bitterly of that. (I'll tell you, by the way, that woman and I are still good friends. And that's a monument to *her* character rather than mine.)

All right. So the church is like a temple with the leadership *supporting* all the other stone in it. And the ministry is that support structure from underneath – Christ the chief cornerstone – the firstborn among many brethren. Brother siblings are peers, aren't they? The reason that is to be done is because the church is also like a body – each member to perform some very important function, and the ability to function *uniquely* in the body. That is what a body does. It has parts that each perform a *unique* function, don't they? Functions that the other parts don't do. And so God gives us capabilities so that we can do things that are different from other people in the body and so that we can be successful in contributing to it.

And how is that work to be done? And what in the world does that have to do with freedom? Well, we probably wouldn't know except that God uses yet *another* word picture that teaches something else about the church. Let's go to Mark 4. It says, referring to Jesus:

Mk. 4:26 – *He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like" – okay, get ready, here comes the third picture – "a man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how." Nobody can really explain how or why a seed sprouts. We just know that it does. And nobody's been able to replicate that at all. Nobody can create life. Then He says, in verse 28, "All by itself the soil produces grain: first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head." It happens in stages. What do you know! "As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."*

So what can we learn from this? Well, the church just grows *all by itself!* It's designed to spread and grow like bermuda grass. Have you ever gotten bermuda grass in your lawn? You just can't get rid of it! You'll see a patch of it. You might spray it with weed killer. Everything dies out and gets brown. Pretty soon that patch is filled with bermuda grass again. You made it worse! So the church just grows all by itself. It was designed to spread and to grow like plants do. Paul used that same analogy that Jesus did. He planted and Apollos watered. He's talking about plants and how they grow.

So let's look at a biblical example of how this works in Acts 8, and verse 1.

Acts 8:1 – *And Saul was there giving approval to his death – that would be Stephen. And on that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem. And all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.* Have you ever taken a dandelion that's white and blown on it? And how it all just kind of whooooo? That's what the church did. They were like seeds. *Godly men, verse 2, buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him, but Saul began to destroy the church, going from house to house. He dragged off men and women and put them in prison.* Paul thought that he could kill the church by persecuting it. Then it says in verse 4:

V-4 – *Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.* See he just made it worse! They were no longer in one place. They were now all over the place. And they were *all* preaching the word. So God was using Paul to spread the word before He even called him! Verse 5 says:

V-5 – *Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed Christ there.* Who was Philip? He was a deacon, right? He wasn't an apostle. He wasn't an evangelist. He was not called that. He just went down there to Samaria – to Gentiles! – *and proclaimed Christ to them. And when the crowd heard Philip, and saw the miracles that he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. So there was great joy in that city!* Of course, we have to wonder whether Philip ever got permission to do this.

But if you read in Acts 11, we see that Barnabas went down there to see what was going on. They didn't know until they heard about it by the grapevine that this was happening. And when Barnabas went down there, it's interesting the attitude that he had. He went to see what was going on. And when he saw that *God* was working there, he didn't correct them for doing something they hadn't been told they could do. He told them to keep on keeping on with it, because he realized God's Spirit was there.

In that analogy of the Kingdom of God as a plant, do you understand what part you play in that? We're the seeds.

I was talking to a friend of mine, who's a Greek Orthodox monk, and I asked him how the Orthodox Church could suffer seventy years of intense persecution in the Soviet Union, and then within weeks of the Soviet downfall, the church sprang back to life as strong as ever? And he said, "We believe that to kill the church you would have to kill

every last member in it, because each one of us contains the entire church.” Isn’t that what Jesus is telling us? Each seed contains the ability to replicate the plant. How does it do that? Well, it’s called DNA, right? Each seed contains the DNA of the entire organism. Do we have any spiritual DNA? All born into one Spirit. The spiritual DNA is the Holy Spirit of God. We are all walking around with the Holy Spirit in us, which is the capability to replicate the church. We are seeds. That’s why Jesus used that analogy – so we could understand that!

Now we were talking about spiritual gifts. You know there is one gift, even though we’re all unique.... There is one gift that *all* of us have. All of us. And I mean, beside the Holy Spirit. We have all been rescued by Jesus Christ. We have been saved from our sins. And we have been set on a new path. And every last one of us can go tell others about that, and how good that was for us, and how grateful we are. That’s what Philip and Stephen were doing. And that’s how the church spread. They were *so* glad that Christ saved them from their sins. And people were happy to learn about that.

Now that woman that came to me, who wanted to use her gift to help the church and I wouldn’t let her, do you know why I wouldn’t let her? I mean, I’ve thought about this a lot. And I could have told you, “Well, it’s because the church I was in wouldn’t allow it.” I mean, that was the excuse I gave her. But you know what the *real* reason was – when I really stripped all the excuses away from it? It was because *I* didn’t trust the Holy Spirit to produce fruit in her, because I didn’t have the time to supervise it. I thought she might mess things up or it might not be done the right way. I couldn’t control it. Well, just think about that dandelion – the white one – you know, when you blow that? Do you control where all those seeds go? No. And yet that is the picture of the church. When a man scatters seed on the ground, he’s not taking each one of them and putting them right where he wants. It’s just *out there*. There is no control. And you know, each one of those seeds is capable of producing another human dandelion plant without being controlled. It’s designed to happen *just like Jesus said*, “All by itself.” All by itself.

Have you ever thought about how Jesus Himself worked when He was with us on earth? It says He sent out seventy men, two by two. And if there were a hundred and twenty people at Pentecost, and you had seventy men, there would probably be seventy women – or thereabouts. So maybe they lost some between now and then, but He emptied the barn to send out seventy people, it sounds like to me! And He sent them out like seeds. He didn’t worry about them not doing it right. He surely could have done it better than they could have. But He just threw them in the deep end and it was sink or swim. That’s called accelerated hands-on learning today, right? And they learned how to do it! And they came back with growth. Not because they could do it as well as Christ could, but because Christ actually *was* with them through the Holy Spirit! That’s why He could let them go. He had faith!

So now do you see where freedom comes in here? It’s not that the church is a bunch of raving maniacs, who are totally chaotic. There *is* structure in the church. The temple is organized. The body is organized. A planting is organized. But there also is freedom. There’s freedom like dandelions have. And in the church, God provides pastors and

elders and teachers to set us free, and to water us, so that we can go out and *do* the work that God wants us to do.

So the church is going to function the way that Jesus told us it should function. It can't be any other way, but free. And it's not just that we're free from death, or free from the oral law, or even from the Old Covenant, but that we are set free to reach out into the world and impact other people with our unique story of how Jesus Christ saved us, and set us on a good and right path, and how He has blessed us and had mercy on us.

There's one more story that I want to tell you about what the church is like. And I'm not going to turn to it. You all have heard this so many times. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is like a man who travelled to a far country." Before he left, he gave various amounts of money to his servants. And he told them, "See what you can do with this while I'm gone. See how much you can produce." So he gave ten talents to one, five to another, and one yet to another. And I think you know the rest of the story. Could He be talking about us and the spiritual gift He gives us to use for the benefit of the church?

What are *you* doing with your gift? With your talent? Have you buried it? Or are you making more talents out there? Has God put any desires in you lately? Any urging? Any urgency? Any ideas that kind of draw your attention? What would you like to try?

There's an excellent story in this month's issue of *Faith Networks* by a man named Ken Swiger from Knoxville. Their group holds church monthly, I believe it is, in a nursing home. It tells all about how they do it and what's happening there in their group. That's a bunch of people that kind of thought for a while about what they wanted to do and the thing just kind of took root in them. This is something *we* would like to get involved in. So that's what they do.

Our little group has been slowly chewing on an idea for some time about how to go about doing this. One day somebody mentioned helping a battered women's shelter. And everybody just kind of looked around at each other, and thought ahhhh...and sort of smiled. We're kind of slowly trying to feel our way into that. And if you read Mr. Swiger's story, there's lots of frustrations in doing this. It's never easy. And we're having problems even finding out how to get an in-road into some of these places, but if God wants to do it, that door's going to open. And if He doesn't, then they'll stay shut. Maybe He wants us to do something else. But we're going to find out.

Now this last week I went to the house of an intern that works at our clinic, and I was blessed to hold her infant daughter on my chest while she slept. She's a month old. I did that because, one, I was invited, and two, Elaine and I have been thinking about going to the hospital and holding babies – cuddling babies. Most hospitals have a program for doing that. And I decided that yeah, after doing that, I definitely want to get involved in that. That is fun! That's not work. That's therapy. That's relaxation. That's calming.

What is it you'd like to do? What can you do? How could you contribute to impacting your community with the light of Jesus Christ? Who needs to be taken care of? If you ask

God to show you, He will let you know. And once He lets you know, He won't let you fail, because He's the one telling you to do it. And if He's for it, nobody can get in your way.

Well, we could go on and on. We could tell encouraging stories of how the church is free in Jesus Christ, but we're already a bit long. So I want to leave you with one scripture to think about. It's in 2 Corinthians 3:15 through 18.

2 Cor. 3:15-18 – *Even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom, and we – that would be all us free Christians filled with that free Spirit – who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory of being transformed into His likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*