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June 24, 2017

Session 2

Everybody, okay? Good. Okay, we just started this morning looking at what it means to be empowered and how important it is and how necessary that is. But then there's a difference between being empowered and being equipped. And I'd like to take a little time now to talk about what it means to be equipped. And I have to confess, I was surprised. It's not what I thought it was. So it's actually very interesting. And for those of you who speak Greek, forgive me if I don't pronounce this correctly. It's all Greek to me, you know.

The word that Paul used when he talked about equipping was (katartismos). You were probably, I suppose, talking about this at breakfast this morning, weren't you? I'll spell it for you. It's k-a-t-a-r-t-i-s-m-o-s. And this is the word that Paul used, and it's used throughout the New Testament; it's a Greek word that means equipped. But it's more than what we... When we think equipped, we think, okay, if I go build a deck, I'll need a saw; I'll need a crowbar to build that deck. We think of tools. Let me use a couple of examples of where this word is used in scripture and it might make more sense.

In Luke 6, it's just a one-liner, Jesus says: *A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.* So in that context, katartismos means perfectly trained. In Romans 9, Paul talks about a vessel of wrath prepared for destruction. So something that is created to use for a specific purpose. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul says: *We pray exceedingly night and day that we might see your face and complete what is missing in your face.* So it's about completion but there's something there, but with this katartismos, you complete or maybe fill in some of the gaps. In Hebrews, Paul says: *May the God of peace make you complete.* So it's a completion in every good work to do His will. And in 1 Peter, Peter prays this for us: *May the God of all grace, who has called us by his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a little, perfect, establish, strengthen and settle you.* So it's not just simply giving you some tools to go do a job; it's more, if I may put it this way, it's more about you than it is about the work you do. And I think that's really important for us.

When Christ wants us to be equipped, it's more about the person of you than the actions of you. And I gotta say, friends, I think it's a trap that most of us fall into. I hear this a lot; I find myself saying this a lot: Well, I'm not really doing anything. I don't know what good I am. I'm not really doing anything. Christ doesn't care what you're doing; He cares who you are. And, you know, I hear stories all the time of somebody who has had a stroke and been hospitalized and they say, "I can't do anything now." Oh my goodness! Your prayer, your offering up your suffering, you're uniting your heart with Christ crucified. You can do so much, perhaps even

more good, than those who just kind of wander around in circles, waving our hands and yelling. Don't ever define your worth and your being by your doing. Whatever you do, good for you, I mean, good for you to do that. But don't ever think you're earning points by what you do. Christ loves you for you, not for the things you do. Because with all due respect, God could save the world single-handed. He could save the world with one hand tied behind His back. He doesn't need you to do a lot of things.

Here's a cute story. During the second Vatican council, a very tumultuous time, a very difficult time, there's a cute story that John the 23rd was having a bad day. I'll put it mildly, he was having a bad day. The church was, you know, (...); he was just having a bad day. He goes to bed at night and returns back to his chambers and, I mean, everybody is, "Don't forget this..." and "remember this..." A big stack of papers he had to take care of and he said, "Lord, it's your church. I'm going to bed." What an act of faith and what an act of humility. If the pope can leave the church in the hands of God, why can't we? So I have to stress this point: Equipping isn't about how much work God can squeeze out of you. Equipping is about God changing your nature to be more like Him. It's a complete act of love; it's a complete act of generosity and goodness on His part. He really does love you. He really, really does care about you. And if you never did another thing, He would still love you and care about you. And I would say for probably most of us in this room, we no longer do things so that God loves us; we do things because God loves us. That's the way it needs to be.

One time I was working with the leadership team and they were having all kinds of problems. Arguments, divisions, dissension. And everybody was so uptight: "Well, we got this prophecy, and we got this scripture, and last week we had a vision." I said, "Could I ask a question?" "Yeah, what is it? What is it?" I said, "When is the last time, as a leadership team, you guys went bowling?" "We do not bowl. We're the leaders of the prayer group." I said, "Maybe that's your whole problem. You know, why don't you guys lighten up a little bit? Why don't you let God be God? Why don't you guys go bowling?" So I took them bowling. And the big prophetic leader, the first ball he threw was a gutter ball. This guy could walk on water but he's a lousy bowler. And then half way through, someone says, "Think it's okay if I had a beer?" "As long as you get two." Now all of a sudden, all of these great holy, anointed miracle workers were sitting around having hot dogs and beer and throwing terrible gutter balls, and they became human beings again. And interestingly enough, all the great, profound, spiritual problems of the group just went away. So do you guys want to go bowling later? Say no more, okay.

But I have to say that. Don't think of equipping, from God's point of view, as trying to get more work out of you. He loves you. And He just wants you to be with Him, so that the two of you can work together. Everybody take a breath and lighten up and relax a little bit. And let's just allow ourselves to be loved by God. God really does, in spite of what we think, God really does know what He's doing. And at the end of the day, the world will be saved. And at the end of the

day, every knee really is going to bow and every tongue really is going to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. And sin and hell and death and Satan will be far, far away from us, and we'll all be in the sweet by-and-by. So let's all just kind of relax and enjoy ourselves and serve the Lord and serve one another. That's the foundation of equipping.

So let's go back to these words now and see if we can get a little bit more insight into what Paul and the Holy Spirit are trying to teach us. It's really, friends, about character. Equipping means bringing to perfection; it means filling in the gaps; it means making you complete and whole; it means making you ready for whatever work God has in mind. In fact, there was an interesting story in preparation for this. They found an old Greek manuscript, and it wasn't religious. It was secular about a man who bought a house. This is really historical. And in this letter, this guy uses the verb *katartismos* about his house. He says, "The house is built but it's not prepared, it's not *katartismos* because we didn't have any furniture yet." So the sense is, yah, they have the empty shell of the house but it isn't... It's there but it's not quite what they need yet, until the furniture's in, and then they had a big banquet. "Now we have ourselves a house."

So when Paul says he wants to bring something to completion, he wants to fill it, he's not so much saying, "Well, you don't have your act together." It's not a criticism. But I think everybody here, if you're half way honest, would acknowledge there's probably room for you to grow still. There are probably still things that need a little bit of refining, a few things that kind of need the rough edges knocked off, a few attitudes that need to change. I think most of us... I think a fair-minded person would agree to that. So we're moving from glory to glory, moving from... frankly, we're moving towards perfection. And I think most of us here would say we're not there yet. But I hope you're comfortable with being perfected because that's how you're going to be in heaven. And, I mean, I figure why wait. Let's get started now, because if we are freer, healthier, better people now, think of all the good we can still do with the remaining days we still have on earth. Again, God loves you so much and wants to be in a deep relationship with you, but He loves the other 7.5 billion, and He wants to be in a relationship with them. And so He's... You're His chief game plan to save the world. So He wants you to know His love so that you can share that love with others.

Let me just divert for a second and tell a story that I think really makes this point. This just happened down along the Gulf coast. There was a man, a big, high-pressure business executive who retired from up north, and he moved down to the Gulf coast of Florida. And he said, "For years I have had to hassle with people, and put up with all kinds of nonsense. I'm retired now and I'm going out on the pier and I'm going to fish. I don't want to talk to another person; I don't want to be nice to anybody; I don't want to take anybody out for lunch; just leave me the heck alone and let me fish." So he was kind of, you know, well, stay away from that old guy. He kind of went on, definitely didn't talk a lot, kind of an old curmudgeon, and

would fish. And one day he was fishing off this jetty into the Gulf, and there was a pelican out in the water who had a hook in its jowl and the fish line was caught in its wing. So the bird was kind of pulled to the side. Now this guy was not known as kind of like the Mother Teresa of Florida but he saw this poor bird and then he just felt so bad for it. He had this big fish net and he climbed down the rock and caught this pelican and grabbed it by the neck back up on the jetty, and went into his tool box and got his pliers and cut the hook and got the wire off its wings, and the bird was okay. And then he reached into his bait bucket; he had a couple of fish and he fed fish to this pelican. Well, now he had a friend for life. And the next day he goes out fishing and that same pelican was there, and the next day the pelican was there, and a couple days later there was another pelican who had been, I think it was like hit by a boat and it wasn't severely hurt, but he caught that one and gave it some fish, kind of nursed that one back to health. So eventually these pelicans, whenever he showed up, they just kind of... You know pelicans, they just kind of stand there looking at him. And just kind of random, people started calling him pelican man and it used to just bug the daylights out of him. "Hey, pelican man, got extra bait or did you already give it away?" Ha, ha, ha. "Shut up!" It would just bug him but everybody would call him pelican man just to get under his skin. Well, eventually, it was kind of a big joke for awhile, but eventually people realized that he really was trying to do something good. So when a pelican had been hurt, again not severely but had been hooked and a wing was broken, they gave it to pelican man. He had no medical background but he took it to a vet. And really, this is a true story. He lived only a few blocks from the ocean. He converted his yard to a big cement pool full of sea water for all these odd ball birds. Then a bike club had a spaghetti fund raiser for him and all these veterinarians started donating their time, and it kind of became this big thing. And recently, a couple of years ago, pelican man passed away. God bless his soul. But he donated his house to keep this pelican half-way house – I don't know what else you'd call it – to keep this pelican half-way house going. Now here's the weird thing. It had such a woeful reputation; it's kind of a cool thing now. Anybody who finds a wounded pelican, they always bring it to the house. But this happens quite often. True story. It's not unusual in the morning to have a healthy pelican standing on the porch with a wounded pelican standing next to it. And when they looked... Every bird they care for, they band. They put a band on them for when they return to the wild. So typically they'll find one of their birds on the porch with a wounded bird. Now I don't know how pelicans talk to each other, but this one goes, "Man, I just busted my arm." And the other pelican says, "Look, I've got wings. I can't do anything about this, but I know somebody who helped me when I needed it. I can't fix you but let me take you to his house and he'll take care of you." And they say it's not unusual for two pelicans to be literally walking down the sidewalk together. They go, "Hey, man, we're going to the pelican house again." And one poor bird is dragging his wing. I believe that is exactly the image of what this equipping is about.

Everyone in this room has had a broken wing, a hook in their jowl. Everyone in one way or another has been caught up in the fish string of the world. And Pelican Man came to us and

set us free and healed us. And then He said, "You're free to go. Go raise a family. Go get a good job. Go take care of your kids. Go on vacation. Go and live your life with the freedom that I have granted you. Go." And we have gone. But we will always carry the band around our heart. And if Pelican Man's kindness means anything to us, the next time we see someone with a broken wing or a hook in their jowl, God have mercy on us if we don't take them to Pelican Man.

You and I have no power to heal or to free, but Pelican Man does. And what Pelican Man wants of us is equipping. He wants us to walk with Him. He wants us to allow ourselves to relax while He pulls the hook. He wants us to sit there and endure the pain of having the broken wing set, so that we can go out and help the others with the wings and the hooks. That to me is the best analogy I've ever heard of what it means to be equipped. It's not about what you can do; it's about being healed by Pelican Man and then finding the next pelican who's broken to walk them over to His house. That's it, folks. That's the whole thing right there. That's what it means to be equipped.

Having said that, God equips us in several ways and I want to take a few minutes to look at some of the concrete ways that we're equipped for ministry to build up the body of Christ. I said earlier today that there's two primary ways that God is working in our life and He works in both charism and character. Two important words: charism and character. And I would suggest to you that charism without character can be dangerous. But character without charism at times can be benign. God wants us to be fruitful for the kingdom of God. And to completely just eradicate charism, I think frankly, is a mistake. And here's the foundational question everybody here has to ask themselves. Are charisms of God or are they simply the hysteria of men? If they're the hysteria of men, then let's admit that and cut it out. If they're really the work of God, then we need to come to the respect of them.

I want to share with you something from the Catechism of the Catholic Church. It's too long for me to write; it's about three paragraphs, but for those of you who would care to reference this in your Catechism at home, you can look up paragraphs 799, 800 and 801. And let me just briefly hit a few highlights. Now, this book is not written by the Charismatic Renewal or for the Charismatic Renewal. This is the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. And I quote: "Whether extraordinary or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men, and to the needs of the world." The Catholic Church is saying that charisms are from the Spirit for the building up of the Church. It can either be something quite dramatic or something quite, you know, unnoticeable, but it's for the building up of the Church, for the good of people, and for the world. "Charisms are to be accepted with gratitude by the person who receives them and by all members of the Church as well." Let me read that again. "Charisms are to be accepted with gratitude by the person who receives them and by all members of the Church as

well.” Technically speaking, a person who makes fun of charisms... they need to read the Catechism of the Catholic Church. I don’t think I need to say more on that. “They are a wonderfully rich grace for the apostolic vitality and for the holiness of the entire Body of Christ...”. And here comes the caveat that we in the Charismatic Renewal often don’t read. “...provided they really are genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit and are used in full conformity with authentic promptings of this same Spirit, that is, in keeping with charity, the true measure of all charisms.” So on one hand the Church is saying that charisms are a good thing; but just not everything everybody does is really necessarily an authentic charism. Just because someone gets some crazy idea, “Oh, well, God told me”, well, maybe He did and maybe He didn’t. So the Church is putting some pressure on us. You just can’t, you know, say everything is fine. It’s gotta be discerned. And here in the last paragraph: “It is in this sense that discernment of charisms is always necessary. No charism is exempt from being referred and submitted to the Church’s shepherds.” And here’s an interesting quote again: “Their office (their job) is not intended to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to what is good, so that all the diverse and complimentary charisms work together for the common good.” So, when somebody says to you, “What does the Church think about charisms?”, you can just give them those three paragraphs. But I hope you heard both the affirmation of charisms but also the warning to make sure it’s legit. Not every crazy idea is necessarily a charism. And we do a disservice when we don’t discern. We say, “Well, it must be the Lord,” because we don’t have the moral strength to say, “Friend, I think you need some help here.” Okay, enough said about that.

I want to talk about character and charisms. Character and charisms. Let’s start with character because it’s a big part of this book. In Confirmation, we talk about the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. And that’s based on Isaiah 11:1-2. And the Church has taken that passage and somewhat codified it and made it the seven gifts of the Spirit. And in the Catechism, they’re listed as: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord. And here’s what the Catechism says about that list: They complete and perfect. That’s exactly what Paul is saying about equipping – complete and perfect – the virtues of those who receive them. They complete and perfect, exactly the same words. They make the faithful docile in readily obeying divine inspirations. So what do those seven gifts you get at Confirmation do? They make you docile in readily obeying divine inspirations. So the Catechism of the Catholic Church admits that people get divine inspirations. And these seven gifts of the Holy Spirit which we get at Confirmation, they make us open to respond to the Spirit. So, can you imagine your own life if you and I lived with wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord? Can you image how much better our lives would be if, if nothing else, those were the benchmarks of your life?

Now, in Ephesians 5:22, St. Paul talks about the fruit of the Spirit. And again, taken from the Catechism’s version, it’s listed as this: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,

generosity, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity. Your bible may have it recorded a little bit differently, different translations portray it different ways, but here's my point: The fruit of the Spirit, as you look at Ephesians 5, it doesn't refer to it as the fruits; there's no plural. There's only one fruit of the Spirit, and all these facets are one fruit. So you can't say, "Well, I'll take patience and joy but I'll skip modesty." You don't get that choice, because what the fruit of the Spirit is, it's the personality traits of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. It's the personality of God. And you lucky people, you. You have the Holy Spirit living in you so the personality of the Holy Spirit is starting to rub off on you. Isn't that amazing? The personality of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity is starting to rub off on you because He lives within you and His character traits are slowly becoming your character traits. Wouldn't you love to work with a person like this? Wouldn't you love to be married to a person like this? Wouldn't your spouse wish they were married to a person like this? Friends, just for a moment, just set aside charisms for a moment. If this alone happens to us in terms of equipping, the world would be converted. Who would not want to, you know?

And I can say, in my own journey, a big part of my journey was my sister, Marilyn. It was during the Vietnam war and Marilyn was kind of like the family whiner. I'm sure you don't have anyone like that in your family. But, you know, Mom was making meatloaf. "Are we having meatloaf again?" So Mom's making spaghetti. "Uh, I'd rather have meatloaf." "I don't want to take out the trash." I mean, so Marilyn went off to college and we were kind of happy to see her go. We thought maybe she should get, like, a doctorate – overseas, you know, make it a lifelong study. So a couple summers later, Marilyn comes home from college and we're eating dinner, and Marilyn's talking about God and how happy she is. And I'm like, "Oh, that's real nice." After dinner, my mom was forking the dishes to wash, and Marilyn volunteered, "Mom, I'll do the dishes." My mother almost dropped the dishes, because we believed Marilyn doing the dishes was the third secret of Fatima. I mean, this is like unheard of; this is a sign for sure of the return of Jesus Christ. So after my mom kind of got her wits about her, she said, "Thanks. Actually I'd like to get this done because I want to go visit my mother (our grandmother). She's not been feeling good and I want to go check in on her." And Marilyn says, "Oh, I'd love to go visit grandmother. Let me do the dishes and I'll join you." And I'm like, "You don't even like grandma. You're always saying she's so old and boring; there's nothing to do. And now you want to go see grandma? Can I see some identification? Who are you and what have you done with my sister?" Later on, Marilyn would talk about praying in tongues and signs and wonders; I really didn't know what she was talking about. But I saw a different person. I saw a person full of peace, love, joy, kindness, patience. I saw a person operating with wisdom and knowledge and understanding. I didn't get all the charismatic stuff, you know, but I didn't know what had happened to my sister. So whatever that was, boy, would I love to be that kind of a person. And months later, I said, you know, "Marilyn, 'what happened to you?" And she told me about Jesus and she told me about the Spirit. And I said, "Boy, could He do that for me?" So I'm standing here today, not because Marilyn spoke in tongues and

raised anybody from the dead. I stand here today because I saw a transformation of a human being who carried her beginnings of the character of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Don't ever underestimate the power of character.

And I guess on the other side of the coin, I've had this experience, and I bet you have too. Did you ever meet somebody who's really good? They pray over people; they're very dynamic; they're very charismatic. They are so full of themselves, it's pathetic. They're rude; they're arrogant; they interrupt; they always get the last word in. Yeah, they're very charismatic but I'm not sure they're very Christ-like. Character has to be the foundation for charism, I really believe that. Now God works through arrogant idiots all the time, you know, case in point. You don't have to be perfect for God to work with you. But we should probably start on that journey of surrender and stuff.

So let's take a quick look at charisms. We talked about character as a way of being equipped. Let's talk about charisms. 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12 – you can look that up on your own – have a lot about charisms. And people say, "Well, are they really necessary?" Well, I don't know; I guess they are because God gave them to us. I mean, people will say, "Well, it's kind of a little thing." Here's my opinion. I am such a broken, needy person. Who I am to think, "Oh no, God, I don't need your help. I can do it." What arrogance! If God thinks charisms have a role, that's good enough for me. God says, "I'm giving. Take them."

I'll share with you a couple... rather than trying to get too theological here, I want to tell you a couple stories of where I've seen charisms being used in very practical ways and how they equip people for the building up of the Body of Christ. One of the things that I think... it's kind of a tough thing for people, this whole thing of the gift of tongues, praying in tongues. Is that hysteria; is that real; are you just speaking French and I don't it, you know, what's really going on here? So I want to share with you three stories before we take a break. And to be honest with you, I don't completely understand them so I'm just going to tell them to you and I don't, myself personally, I don't try to get God to fit in my little box anymore. There's a lot of things that are mysterious, a lot of things I don't understand, and I don't need to control. So here's three mysteries and maybe you can figure it out and tell me what's going on here.

Awhile ago, a young man had gone through a Life in the Spirit seminar. They kept talking about praying in tongues, and he thought it was kind of weird. "I don't really, you know, get the point of that." So he wasn't praying in tongues and didn't see much point in it. One night about midnight, he wakes up from a sound sleep and literally in a panic. He said, "I woke up terrified; I didn't know what was wrong but I was terrified. And I sensed that something was wrong. So I literally rolled out of bed in my underwear saying, 'God, whatever is wrong, please help them. Whatever's wrong, please help them.' And I just kept saying the same thing. And all of a sudden I started praying in a language that I didn't know. It was all that stuff that they were

talking about in that Life in the Spirit seminar.” And he said, “I had no idea what these words meant. I felt that I was praying at a deeper level than I had ever prayed before. And after awhile I felt that whatever it was had come to an end and I went back to bed, you know, thinking no more pepperoni pizza at 10:00 at night.” But about 2:00 in the morning he wakes up again with the same sense of foreboding, rolls out of bed, and says, “God, please help them. God, please help them.” And he prays again in tongues, prays and prays. Eventually it came to an end and he goes back to bed. About 4:00, 4:30 in the morning, he wakes up a third time and he says, “This is life and death.” He gets out of bed and kneels by his bed, crying, “God, whoever you (...), help them.” And he found himself praying like this again. Finally, it comes to an end and he feels like whatever it is, it’s over now. By now, it’s like 5:30 in the morning so now he takes a shower and gets up and goes to work. Really had no concept of what this was all about. Two weeks later he had completely forgotten the whole incident. And he runs into an old high school buddy of his. And typical chit chat, “How are you? Fine. How are you? Fine.” And after a few minutes of that kind of superficial stuff, the other guy became very real. “Truth to tell,” he says, “I’m not doing okay. Got my own business; I’m hemorrhaging money and it’s putting a huge pressure on our marriage.” And he said, “I could lose the business. You remember in high school, I was a pretty heavy drinker. I’m drinking all the time now. I’m really, really on the ropes. And it’s gotten so bad that about two weeks ago, I actually considered taking my life. I have a lot of cash in my house because of my business and therefore I made a bank deposit so I could carry a gun. So I was drinking heavy, a stack of bills, and I opened my drawer to get another bill out, and there was that gun. About midnight, I just picked that gun up and thought how I could be out of this in three minutes. Put the gun down, closed the door, had a few more drinks, kept working, kept working. About 2:00 in the morning, I opened that drawer up, picked that gun up and felt the weight in my hand, I pulled that handle back and I thought I gotta do this. Put the gun down, shut the drawer. Kept drinking. About 4:00, 4:30 in the morning, opened the drawer, picked up the gun. I pulled the hammer and I put it to my temple.” And he said, “You’re going to think it’s the booze but I felt an invisible hand. I couldn’t see any but I felt a hand come and gently pull the gun away and hold my hand on the desk. I didn’t see anybody; I didn’t hear anybody; but I felt, I’m telling you, I felt a hand on my hand and whoever this was, they loved me and they did not want me to do this.” He said, “I put the gun away and it’s over. My wife and I are in counseling. I think we’re going to make it. We’ll figure out the business. We’ll figure it out but right now the most important thing is that I’m looking for whoever that hand was because I need to meet him and thank him for saving my life.” Now in case you haven’t done the math, our friend is kneeling in his underwear by his bed praying in this crazy talk that means absolutely nothing to him at the precise moment our other friend is fighting for his life. That’s the power of prayer in the Spirit. Now I’m sure that raised a lot of questions and I don’t have any answers but there it is.

Recently I was up along the St. Lawrence Seaway in French Canada, and there’s a little prayer group about your size up there. And of course, their language is French. So everybody is...

they're not speaking in tongues. They're all French speakers and they're speaking in French. So they're singing their songs in French and like, we have cookies, they made those French, you know. All the normal stuff. So this French girl stands up and starts going on and on. It was very interesting. Nobody had any clue as to what's going on. Some guy in the back of the church starts wailing, I mean, just sobbing. I look around and there's a Chinese man in the back of church, and they brought him up and he could speak just a little bit of English and French. And here's what he said. He's from China. His boat was making a delivery; it was passing through the St. Lawrence Seaway and they were tied up and while the boat was unloading, he had a couple hours off duty. His wife is dying in China; she's dying. And he said, "I had to find a church, any church, to ask God for help. So I just walked in here and I knelt down and asked for help. And this lady just stood up and said (in the dialect of his village), 'I love you, my son, I am with your wife, she is healed'." The French person had no... knew nothing of this. So this guy is now crying and all emotional. The priest is there, and he says, "Well, I'd like to see if this is real. Come over to the rectory and let's call your home." So he takes the Chinese guy and they make a long-distance phone call. His family member picks up and says, "I'm so glad you called. You will not believe this. About 10 minutes ago, the fever broke. She's come to; she's going to be okay." Now, I'm telling you, this isn't somebody telling me something they read out of a comic book. I talked to the people who this happened to.

And just a third story, and it was mentioned some time ago that I had the opportunity to walk across America with this cross. And I had a lot of chances to talk to people and meet with people. And one day I was sitting on a curb in Los Angeles with a guy who lived on the street. And he'd been beat up and been in a fight and stuff. And we're sitting on a curb; he's got a bottle in a bag; we're just sitting there. I got this six foot cross; he's got his beer. You know, we're just talking about life and stuff. And he was just telling me how things had been for him. And I said, "Would you be okay if we just took a minute to pray together?" And he goes, "Yah, that's pretty cool." So I'm always a bit of a coward. I never want to push anybody too far, so I have this safe prayer. You ever had a safe prayer? "Oh God, thank you for the beautiful day, for the birds that chirp, for the blue sky. Thank you for Bambi and all the butterflies in the world." You know, a very safe prayer. The guy's kind of sitting there, "Yah, whatever." So I put my hand on his shoulder and I'm trying to do my safe prayer. And I feel the Lord urging me to start saying it in the Spirit. "I don't know. I don't think that's a good idea right now." And I'm... "Thank You, Jesus, thank You for Your love. Thank You for Your mercy" and here it comes. I start singing in the Spirit. I've got my eyes closed thinking this guy is going to bolt, you know. So I'm sitting there and I could just feel him sobbing, and about 4 or 5 minutes later, I kind of look over and he's sitting there, just tears running down his face. And I said, "Are you okay?" And he said, "Oh man, I am fine. I didn't quite get all that stuff about the birds and the trees and all that." He said, "But when you started singing the song of the angels, I actually felt like a ball of fire go into my heart. And I can still feel it right now. I absolutely know that God loves me and cares about me. And for the first time in my life, I love Him. I want to know Him. What was

that song that you were singing?" I said, "Pal, you and me and a bottle of beer. I don't know." And he said, "There were many, many voices singing the song. There wasn't just one. There were voices all around me just singing the song, and it makes me love God. Do you think you can teach me the song of the angels so that I too can honor God and keep this fire in my heart forever?" Well, what do I say? We have this thing called Life in the Spirit seminar... and it's really appropriate... Stupid me, Mr. Pharisee, you know. Here's all the hoops you have to jump through in order to... And he says, "Well, I love God and I want to serve God." And I said, "Well, this is really something for people who really want to give their whole life to God." And the guy goes, "Okay", puts his bottle of beer down on the curb, gets up, stands in the middle of the street. I sit on the ground dumbstruck. He drops to his knees in the middle of the street and he lifts his hands and says, "Jesus, I want to give You my whole life and follow You and serve You for the rest of my life." And I'm sitting there like an idiot on the curb. "What are you going to say now, Mr. Pharisee?" So I stood up and walked over there and laid hands on him and there was one more voice in the song of the angels.

So isn't it interesting how this gift of tongues is used in different ways? Sometimes, in the first case, it was a deep prayer of intercession. And it probably wasn't Swahili or Latin or anything. St. Paul says in Romans that we don't know how to pray but God helps us by interceding. The Spirit intercedes through us in sounds and languages that we don't even understand. Okay, that's one snapshot. In the second case, even though nobody else understood it, one man recognized it as the dialect of his village in China, which has over 238 dialects, folks. I mean, this was custom made for that man. And even the person speaking it didn't know it. But this was more of a prophetic or a word of proclamation that had its unique role. And then the third case, I could have prayed Bambi prayers all day and I wouldn't have got anything, but the Spirit of God came and touched this man in a way that no human prayer could have done. So this is, Paul says, this is a gift. But I'm so broken that the least of the gifts is better than anything I could come up with.

My point is: Don't think of charisms as personal medals of honor. This is so not about you. And don't be jealous of charisms and don't be resentful of charisms and frankly, don't make fun of charisms, because either they're the machinations of a bunch of crazy people or there really is something of God in this. And it deserves respect and it deserves kind of a holy appreciation.

We've been talking about empowered and equipping and all that, and we'll have a chance later in the day to pray a little bit more about equipping, but we figure that probably some here maybe haven't had a chance to just be more open to the power of the Spirit, to say, "Yah, God, if there's more for me that You have, I want to be open to that." And this is completely for those who want to. There'll be some quiet music going and prayer teams available for those who want more of the power of the Lord in their life. That's what this extra time is about.