



Words of Blessing

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Epiphany 2003

Week 8. February 23, 2003

Epiphany is: A manifestation of God

It is a time: **For the Full Fruit**

Let go of: **Time**

Your Prayer Each Day: **“Lord, I will follow You. You are my Life.”**

Your anchor is: **Love**

Take on: **Sharing His love**

We are drawing near to the end of this time of Epiphany. An Epiphany can be a special moment when you become aware of something profound in your life. For you, an Epiphany moment will come some time in the weeks ahead. Be open to it, for it is not something one can control or determine will happen. It happens when you least expect it. For you, the moment will bring a realization that you are indeed special and loved by me. That moment will be a manifestation of God in your life. And it will change your life but again. My child, these words have been coming to you not by chance, but by love. They come to you now at this very important time in your life, so that I might hear you say those words: “Lord, I will follow you. You are my life.” I wait for those words from you. At this time in your life and journey you will have to let go of your schedules and time because it is the only way you will be free to share my love with others. I thank you for making me important in your life and day, for taking the time to pray and listen to me in these words. The words are an important gift to you. Treasure them for they will provide fruit and guidance for the journey ahead. For those who continue to struggle to make time for these words. I remind you again, they are a precious gift. You are missing out on a gift of love if you do not give yourself the time each day to read and reflect on what I say to you. Letting go does not mean your life will fall apart, but instead it will bloom and it will bear the full fruit of my love within you, my life within you. It will bear the full fruit of who you are - a child of God and filled with enough love and gifts to share with the world. I need you. You. But, I want you to be willing to follow me wherever I call you to go. I want you to let me be your life. I want you to make time for me in your journey now and each day. Slow down.

Sometimes the tree bears the fruit when we are least expecting it, almost overnight. Other times it seems to take forever. But when the fruit is ready, one cannot wait. That full fruit is the manifestation of God in your life. My child, your anchor in the week ahead is love. Love me. Love others in your life. Love yourself. Love will keep you grounded, and yet it will be the way to grow and use your gifts in wonderful and fantastic ways! Love will bring you inner peace from the turmoil in your life. Love will bring you joy when you feel sadness or despair. Love will bring you smiles through the tears. Love is the sacred manifestation of God in your life. That is what this next

week is about. Let us begin to walk together.

The manifestation of God is shown in me. It is also shown in children, in the sick, the needy and those cast out-alone-searching. When you see such as this, I ask you to share your love with them, and share my love with them. Give them your time. Look at them and see me. Receiving them is receiving me. When you see a child, or someone sick, a person in need or those cast out, know that I held them close to me. I embraced them. I shared my love with them. If you are to follow me as my own disciples did, then you will have to love the least of them, not because I command you to do so, but because you want to do so. When you wonder about your call or your gifts - how and where to use them, see me with these - the least of them. Though your work may not call you to a soup kitchen, a nursing home, hospital or a shelter, you can still love these people. You can share your love with them each day in many ways. Think on how you can do that. I ask you to have a humble heart and one of love. The greatest leaders in the world, my disciples and myself saw the poor, the children and those in need as the kingdom on earth. My child, serve me humbly and courageously using whatever ways your gifts lead you. But, no matter what you do, love the children. Love the sick, the weak, the cast out, the homeless - in my name. You will then be loving me. Open your eyes and when you look at them, you will see me. You will see God.

In the week ahead be aware of the time you have each day. Have you been making time for me at the beginning or end of each day? Are you giving yourself the time to heal, to deepen, to find peace and joy? Begin now. Begin today if you have not been giving time to pray, to the words, to being with me. Begin now. I had to work at making time for God, for prayer and for my own soul each day. I would start out with my disciples and see so much to do, so many people needing me, so many demands. And there were days when I did not take enough time to renew my spirit by being with God. My disciples also felt stretched to meet the needs of the crowds around us needing healing and help. But, I knew there were times they needed rest and I needed rest, and we would go away to 'be' and to listen and give God time to renew us with peace and fill us with the strength to go out again. Make time each day for me, time to pray and be. Make time each Sunday to worship me and worship alongside others. Make time to insure your children and family go to church with you. Make that time together each week a blessing and not a chore. Despite what children say, time away with one's family to worship, sing, pray, be part of a community is very important. It is not a waste of time, but an important use of time. Along with worship, insure that some amount of quiet is found in each day for yourself and those you love.

There are times when life just moves too fast and you can't do half the things you feel you want to do. The faster you go, the more confused you become as to what direction you were headed. Your daily life can easily become a race of rushing to do one thing after another. Take time for quiet and for loving yourself...and loving me. It is in the quiet of the day, when you seek me out, that I can answer your questions, bring you peace, guide you in the day ahead, bring you comfort and refresh your spirit. Being at peace and content will help you to see the answers to what to do, the way to use your gifts or what steps to take next in the journey. Give a gift to yourself, to others in your life and to me - time.

As you give me your time you will be able to hear and see me in your life in many ways. My presence in your life each day will prepare you to bear the full fruit of your call. The journey so far has been about the conversion of your spirit, the seeing and living with me in your life and bearing the fruit of the love I have for you and the love you have for me. My Holy Spirit will bring a great

change to your life and it can begin this week. Are you ready to bear the full fruit? Will you accept my invitation to be transformed into all I know you can be?...that full fruit? Some of you may reject my call to bear the fruit, to use your gifts, time and prayers in the way they were meant to be used. Some of you may not be willing to embrace this radical new life I offer. My child, open your heart to me and all that I offer you. Embrace my love and words joyfully as John did, Mary, Susan, Bill, and St Francis! Then, as they did - go out and bear the fruit by offering my love, words and reality to others. Share my gospel and life. Offer salvation and hope. Offer healing and compassion. Open your heart to my people.

How can you share my love? Throughout time, people have been shown how to love others. I preached the word about love- sharing your love and sharing my love. You have examples in your life of people who love others by forgetting themselves. It is not easy and it is a struggle at times, but they do it. What of you? Are you loving others or sharing my love? You can only do so when you forget yourself, your agenda, plans, needs, and priorities. Some people are able to love, but only in their own way and only if others meet their standards of approval. I ask you to love all as you would love me. See others as my brothers and sisters and children and love them as I do. Love is about kindness. If you want to love others, begin with kindness towards them. If you think you are loving to others in your family, to your friends, to those in your life - ask yourself if you are kind to them. Ask yourself how and if you show kindness to them. Then you will be able to see how much you are loving them or showing them love. If you are going to follow me and have a life of joy, then you have to let go and love. If you desire to be loved, then you will have to look beyond yourself and just love freely and fully. You have to have a heart of sincere kindness. My child, have a heart of love and kindness each day in the world. Be as I would.

To do my work, to see the manifestation of God in your life, to use your gifts and see the full fruit, to follow me - you have to anchor yourself and your life in love. If I am to be your life, then you have to be anchored in love each day and in all ways. It is very simple. Are you willing? Are you willing to let go?

Can you believe and say these words each day: “Lord, I will follow you. You are my life?” My child, when you follow me there will be times of waiting. Waiting for my Holy Spirit to guide you, waiting for change within you, waiting for your faith to be increased, waiting for calm and peace within. There are times in the journey of following me when you are busy and active, and other times when you have to pause and stop “activities” and just be and wait for the “full fruit”. The apples on the tree may look ready to pluck, but is the fruit really ready? These times of waiting may be hours, days, or weeks. You may wonder if you are still actively following your call and doing my work! You are. But, continued nurturing is needed. These times of waiting allow you to nourish your spirit through prayer. Prayer is vital to the journey and to following me. Times of waiting allow you to listen to me again, for often you are off and running before I finish the sentence! Waiting times are to renew your confidence in me and in yourself, and for calm and peace to return. Waiting is also part of following because you may be off track a bit - somewhere along the way you deceived yourself as to what I was asking of you or what you were seeing, or how I was asking you to do my work. Waiting allows you to stop, pray and let my Holy Spirit fill you, letting me show you clearly what the next step is or what I am asking you to do or not do. Sometimes just as children do, you listen to the instructions and are off and running before I finish the sentence. Waiting allows me to finish what I am saying. Follow me with all your heart and you will know when to wait.

There was a time in my journey when I had to prepare my disciples for going out into the world. They had promised to follow me. I was their life. They were going to go out and share my love with the world. They would see the full fruit of their own call and gifts because they went out to simply tell the world who I was and that they were saved. They were to bear witness that I was the Son of God, and had come to show the world the manifestation of his love. The Holy Spirit would fill my disciples and those they touched. They were to be witnesses of the infilling power of my Holy Spirit to others. The Holy Spirit is a manifestation of God within you. And with the infilling of my Holy Spirit, transformation happens. Do you want my Holy Spirit to fill you so that you can follow me, use your gifts, and share my love? Begin with seeking that infilling spirit. When you are faced with a difficult situation or stress - pray and respond with calm. When you face someone you find hard to love or like - pray and respond with compassion. When you think of someone who has hurt you or betrayed you - pray and respond with forgiveness. When you think of how you have hurt others or treated them unfairly - pray, seek forgiveness and change.

To follow me and give me your life, means being a reflection of me - a manifestation of God. Anchored in love you go out, not counting time or cost. You go out to share my love. In the weeks ahead begin to pray about how you will do that. Know what your plan is and where you may want to begin. In my own journey I knew each day that I would go out and talk about love, offer salvation and hope. I knew that people would come to me for healing and counsel and I was ready to do that. In your own life and day you know that certain opportunities will be there. And those opportunities are where you begin to share my love, words and reality. What is your plan for following me and sharing my love with them? Sometimes you will be in situations that require a ready answer, an offer to listen, a hug, and a simple offering to put the other person first. What will you do? How will you respond when asked to listen and not judge, to give up your agenda and let them do what they want? This happens throughout your day, home, work, church, community. If you let me be in your thoughts at all times, you will have the wisdom and humility to make the right decisions. When the plan for your day includes prayer - miracles will happen through me. When your plan is my plan for the day, you will know and live peace, generosity of spirit, compassion and my love. It will be a good day.

In the week ahead, pray asking my Holy Spirit to fill you with a deeper awareness of my presence in your daily life. Set out to anchor your whole life with love. Be my love in the world. Let go of your agenda and accept mine, that is what you have to do in order to follow me and to be happy. Let my Holy Spirit fill you with love enough to share with and transform the world. Let my love shine out from you.

I ask you to remember this prayer each day in the week ahead. Put on your prayer sandals each morning and each night. Let love fill your heart as you say this prayer: **Lord, I will follow you. You are my life.**

I ask you to pray and live the words I give you. There will be parts that I have given you that will help you more than others. Some of those words should be shared with others in your life who are waiting quietly for that answer or assurance. Reach out and share that word. You can also offer the whole message to others, stretching out. Some of the words may not seem to apply to you, at least not today. When you read them again at another time, you may be surprised to find some different words are for you. This I can assure you. The words are for you. They have come to you not by chance but because of the prayers, love and faith of others. Some words are exactly for you and you will know them when you read them. Let them live in your life. They are a gift of the reality of my

presence in your life.

I ask you to pray and think about the words that I have just given you. I also ask you to read and pray about the words and questions that follow. Journal your thoughts. Take time to share your insights with some friends. You may want to go back and re-read some of the words from the previous weeks, and that is okay. But, I ask that you focus mainly on the words for this week. Learn from what I have given to you, keep it in your heart, build from it....but live in the now. If you have just received the words for Epiphany, then do read all of the words from the beginning of Epiphany - like a book, read all the chapters. But once you are caught up...focus on the now. If you have not been diligent in reading and praying my words. It is not too late to begin now. Have you made a small step forward by offering these words to others? The words are a gift, and someone you know well, may be in need of a gift and you did not know it. The words may also be a gift to a new friend, bringing you closer together. The words can also be a gift to yourself by stretching your faith as you step out and “risk” being my witness. Yes, it is time to share my love. I am waiting for you.

- I know you struggle. Pray. Pray in my name and word. Believe I hear and answer. Trust in me and you will be transformed. Place your struggles, fears and concerns in my hands. I am here. I am real.

- Put your life completely into my hands. I love you and care about everything in your life. I am with you.

- I ask you to build up my people, my church, your family, the lives of those around you, the poor in life and spirit, and those in need by sharing the good news. Follow me. Give me your life and I will use you to build up the spirits and lives of others. I will fill you with my love so that you can share that love.

- There are areas of your life where I am trying to stretch you. I ask you to pray about that this week. Pray, be open, listen and search within you. See how you can be more bendable, more yielding. Think and pray about how I am trying to make changes within you, stretch you and make you that new person in me. You have faced situations that have tested you - have they stretched you? Can you see how? Change and difficulty is part of life. Knowing how to pray about it and how to be flexible is important.

- There is no obstacle so big that we cannot overcome it together. Have confidence in my love and presence in your life. Receive my love and let it pour out and overflow into all of your life.

- Spend more time alone with me each day. You will know my presence in those times and find strength and joy. In our time together you will grow in wisdom and faith. You will discover what your work is, and how and where to use your gifts and talents. You will gain courage for following my path.

- Christian love can be shown in many ways each day. Christian love is about many things, including, friendship, relationships, and kindness. The more you love God the more love is manifested in you and out to others. I ask you to treat others as if they were your brothers and sisters - your family. It is difficult at times, but Christian love is extended to those who are hard to love, who are unkind, thoughtless or self centered. In sharing my love, you can reach out to the

homeless, the hungry, sick or lonely. You can reach out to the poor in other countries, to prisoners, and those lost. Anchored in my love you will be empowered to go out and bear the fruit of my presence in the world. There is so much to do in this world and it so saddens me. But, I ask first that your heart be filled with compassion and love. Give the gift of love. Pour it out fully and freely so all may be your brothers and sisters.

- Begin every day by committing your life and day to me. Pray and put all things in my hands.

- My love goes out to all the world and touches all people. Are you willing to spread your arms wide to embrace and love all? The depth of my love is limitless. What of you? Can you open your arms wider?

- Take time for prayer each day, for it is time to be alone with me. I will be with you and fill you with my love. In the quiet we share my presence will be known to you. And I will help you to reflect on my word.

- I ask you to open your heart and mind and welcome unusual visitors that I will send you. Open your heart to meet them and ask them to “come again”. They will need you, in time, in a special way. Know that I send them to you. Share your love with them. Share my love with them. Share your time, your story, your food, your faith and heart. Give with an open and joyful heart. You will be blessed.

- There are people in your life who need your help. Some may live with you, some may be part of your family, and some may be right there - but you do not “see them”. Some may be a friend, a co-worker, a fellow student or someone you have just met. Look to me for that help. Don’t worry about how much time it may take to help them. Just step out. You are my reflection to them. What do they see? Are you being loving? Are you being honest? Are you being caring and thoughtful? Are you speaking with a gentle voice? Do you refrain from complaining or self-pity? Are you really listening to them? Do you treat them as you would treat me? I am in them you know. Do you freely offer your help? Do you freely offer my love? Do you freely share your love? Do you pray with them? Or for them? Can you put their needs and priorities first - even for a day? I will help you to love, and to share my love. Are you ready?

- My words are life. I am giving you words to bring healing, strength and hope. Trust me. Trust me for all things. Do what you have to do and leave me to do the rest. There is a way to go forward, and I will be with you. The mountains of difficulty will be overcome and the rough places made smooth. I love you.

- Believe I am here. My hand is upon you. My love and presence will be manifest in the journey ahead in the next 3 weeks. I am shaping you for a work to be done in my name. I am shaping you so that you can gently and joyfully love all. Trust me. It will not be easy because the door at times is narrow and it means giving up your time, your willfulness, your way and your love. Will you let me change you and bless you?

- Healing comes from my Holy Spirit. Healing begins from within the heart.

- There are times when one is called to share my love with friends, thus being able to be a reflection

of me in their lives. How many times do you put yourself and your desires before the need of a friend? How often do you really listen to them and not focus on what you want to talk about? A friend is a gift from God. A friend can be an angel trying to show you something special from me. Do you take time for them? Life can be very lonely for those without friends, and friends - in time - fade away when neglected or misused. Reflect on how you can be a gentler, kinder, more patient, thoughtful and loving friend.

- A wonderful future and life lies before you. It will be a new life and in some ways a new "you". You will be ever more aware of my presence in all you do. Joy will come. Trust me in this new life for all.

- I love the young people in the world! They are the hope for the world. Love them and encourage them more and more. Support them in your home, churches, community, family and schools. Be open to them.

- I ask you to be the "yeast" of God in your home and surroundings. Let God work in you and through you to touch other lives. Offer God the best of your day - time for prayer. Give God first place in your life and day. The yeast of that commitment will bring forth the bread of life. Yeast sometimes seems to work slowly, almost where you cannot see anything happening. But it is. Slow down and let the yeast of God within you do its work. Your life and the lives of those you touch will be blessed and will deepen.

- I am real. I am here. Know my love, words and reality in all of your life. I love you and bless you. Give love to others in my name. Go out and share my love and kindness with all.

- Be faithful to the path I lay before you. What kind of word are you to your family, friends and strangers?

- It takes time to share the gospel message! Have you slowed down enough to let me show you how and where? There is a particular mission for you. Be open to what it is.

- Here is that word again - evangelism! My child, every person needs to know the gospel in some way. God is manifest in you, and your witness. I will give you an opportunity each day, yes each day, to bring the Good News of my love and salvation to another, to a friend, to someone in your family, to a coworker, to a neighbor, to a stranger. Evangelism is not hard and one only makes it sound scary! It is simple. It is just everyday conversation. When you stay close to me, my Holy Spirit will guide you and help you. My Holy Spirit is the great evangelist who works within you so you may reflect my gospel and love. Go out.

- I want to have a personal relationship with you. I want you to know you are truly my child. I love you.

- Through the Holy Spirit and the manifestation of God, you have been given gifts to use that will build up the body of Christ - his people - the church. How do you identify your gifts? How do you know where and how to use them? Begin with thinking of what you would like to do or can do? Pray about what has always drawn you - do you have the gifts to truly do this? The body of Christ - the people need simple gifts in order to grow, but they also need special gifts such as healing or

super faith. Gifts are given and deepened for the church and the people. You have gifts that can build up the people and the body of the church. Do not be afraid to use them. Do not be afraid to learn. Seek guidance and a friend to help you.

- Prayer is your anchor. Daily prayer will bring change, transformation and peace. Take that time each day to listen for me. Then, throughout the day listen to my Holy Spirit. Time with me is a choice and a gift.

- Go out and bear much fruit. Share my love and my words. Share my reality. Do good things for others. Use your gifts and be open. Turn all praise and glory to me. Take the last seat. Be humble in all things. Be kind. You can be my hands in the world. But my hands are wounded and open. Will you let yours be? Be a bearer of joy and hope by all you say and do and you will touch lives as I did. My Holy Spirit will fill you and guide you. Anchored in prayer and praise - go out and share my love. It is time.

Read and pray my words that follow:

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| Mark 10:27-28 | Hebrews 13:16 | Psalm 98:1-3 | Isaiah 30:21 |
| John 9:38-39 | Philippians 4:12-13 | Psalm 33:4-5 | Proverbs 2:9 |
| Luke 10:1-2 & 27 | 1 Peter 1:1-5 | Psalm 40:8-11 | 1 Samuel 3:10 |
| Acts 16:40 & 8:4-6 | Ephesians 3:16-19 | Psalm 50:14 | Isaiah 40:1 |
| John 15:26-27 | 1 Corinthians 12:12 | Psalm 139:9-10 | Hosea 10:12 |