



Reflections on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit *for Parents and Teens*

Wisdom: Improving in Love and Knowledge of God

Webster's New World dictionary defines *wisdom* as "the quality of being wise, power of judging rightly and following the soundest course of action, based on knowledge, experience, understanding." Wow! Words found in the Gifts of the Holy Spirit!

Wisdom is first in the list of Gifts of the Holy Spirit for a reason. With wisdom comes everything else since it allows us to perfect our faith and relationship with God. It also allows us to cultivate our mind, body and soul for serving God. Thus, we can continue to improve in our love and knowledge of God.

When God told Solomon, "Ask something of me and I will give it to you" (1 Kings 3:5). The only thing Solomon asked for was wisdom. Solomon was a young king and he wanted to rule his people in a just way. "Give your servant, therefore, an understanding heart to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong. For who is able to govern this vast people of yours?" (1 Kings 3-9).

The definition also includes some of the words from the total law of the Jewish people in Micah: *"Do right, love goodness and walk humbly with God" (Micah 6:8).*

In the Book of Deuteronomy Moses is speaking to the People of Israel telling them to observe the statutes and decrees given him from God. Moses says, *"Observe them carefully for thus will you give evidence of your wisdom and intelligence to the nations who will hear of these statutes and say, 'This great nation is truly a wise and intelligent people'" (Deuteronomy 4:6).*

We, too, can be wise and intelligent by observing God's Commandments, statutes and decrees. This is probably asking too much because just like the Israelites, we too, often put God aside and make other things our idols and gods. The chosen people again and again decided to follow other gods. And, time and time again they repented and asked God to forgive them.

God, in his wisdom and faithfulness of his covenant forgave his chosen people. It was only when the people wised up that they realized that God was with them if they observed his statutes and decrees.

So, by loving God and making efforts to know him we can be wise in the choices we make. God gave us a free will to make decisions whether they are good or bad. We cannot blame God for the consequences we incur when things do not go our way. We have a free will. God is not to blame for he is a loving God who will forgive us time and time again.



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Wisdom: Improving in Love and Knowledge of God

Wisdom appears in the Gospels quite a few times. One of those times is found in Chapter 25 of the Gospel of Matthew where he talks about the parable of the ten virgins who went out to meet the bridegroom. *“Five of them were foolish and the other five were wise. The foolish ones did not have enough oil when the bridegroom was arriving while the wise ones did since they had brought extra oil for their lamps. They did not want to share the oil with the foolish virgins and while they were away buying oil for their lamps the bridegroom arrived. The door was closed when the foolish virgins arrived and were not let in to join the wedding feast. The bridegroom said, ‘I do not know you.’ And, so it is with us if we do not stay awake as we do not know the day or the hour when our Lord and savior will come.”*

Jesus drew on this wisdom when as a young man he had to make a decision as to what to do with his life—how to spend the rest of his life. He went into the desert and fasted.

Apparently human beings learned long ago that digestion consumes lots of energy. Maybe even more so than anything else we do during the day. Consequently, if food is taken away, energy is available for other things, such as, reflective thought.

So, if we open ourselves to allow the Spirit to work in us through fasting, then—indeed, it is ancient wisdom according to the prophets.

The Holy Spirit is always there to help us in our wisdom. All we have to do is ask for his help for the Spirit abides in us for God has given him to us.

After Jesus was found in the Temple, his mother Mary and foster father Joseph took him home to Nazareth where he *“grew steadily in wisdom and age and grace before God and men”* (Luke 2:52).

If we have never asked the Holy Spirit to abide in us, to help us, to do for us, maybe we should because he will certainly be there for us.

Cardinal Mercier wrote the following prayer to the Holy Spirit (Secret of Sanctity): *Oh, Holy Spirit, beloved of my soul...I adore you. Enlighten me, guide me, strengthen me, console me. Tell me what I should do...give me your orders. I promise to submit myself to all that you desire of me and to accept all that you permit to happen to me. Let me only know your will.*



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Wisdom: *Improving in Love and Knowledge of God*

Closing Prayer:

***Come Holy Spirit. Fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle the fire
of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you shall renew the face of the earth.***

I can use this Gift by:





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Understanding: Letting the Mind Really Gain a Grasp of the Gospel

Webster's dictionary defines understanding in several ways:

1. The mental quality, act, or state of a person who understands;
2. Comprehension, knowledge, discernment, sympathetic awareness, etc.
3. The power or ability to think, learn, judge, etc.;

Here again we see words found in the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. We can surmise that the Holy Spirit really abides in us even if we do not realize it. God has so generously given us the Holy Spirit and therefore he abides in us; but it is up to us to use the Holy Spirit to grow in the love of God and to gain knowledge of all things of God.

From the beginning of life, we start to gain an ability to understand, comprehend, act, think, and learn. As we grow our minds grow in wisdom, knowledge and understanding.

Not all of us have or obtain the same gifts because we are all different human beings with different faculties to learn. The brain is a very unique element of our body and as such it must be trained to learn through action, word and deed. It is designed to work in a free will style which God has given us from inception.

Consequently, as we grow in stature and wisdom, so too we grow in knowledge. However, knowledge can be good or bad depending on the direction we choose to go and the choices we make in life. It is up to us to use the knowledge that we obtain to choose to do good. In choosing or making wise choices, we learn to love God more deeply and have an intimate relationship with him in all things.

Our God is a loving God, a caring God, a merciful love, a compassionate God, and so many other things. He waits for us and wants us even if sometimes we fail or stray in ways that are not pleasing to him. Just as he searched for Adam and Eve in the Garden, he, too, searches for us.

The Jewish people were given many signs and gifts from and through God by way of the prophets and when things were good and everything was going their way they forgot about God. They did not appreciate the knowledge that God wanted them to have and, that is, to follow his statutes and Commandments. Thus, failing to do so they made and followed other gods to their detriment and doom. And, then, of course, they cried out to God; and, of course, God forgave them and always came to the rescue of his chosen people.



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Understanding: Letting the Mind Really Gain a Grasp of the Gospel

We, too, should choose to have and follow the knowledge of his statutes and Commandments. Although these truths are from the Old Testament, they are enhanced by Jesus Christ in the New Testament. Jesus did not come to abolish the law or the prophets but to enhance them.

In the New Testament, Jesus gives us new insights (knowledge) of prayer—the Our Father, the Beatitudes, the Fruits of the Holy Spirit, and so many other things in our call to action through serving one another—loving God in total.

Jesus spoke in parables to the people and his Apostles asked, *“Why do you speak to them in parables?” He said to them, “Because knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been granted to you; but, to them it has not been granted”* (Matthew 13:10-11).

Jesus goes on to say, *“This is why I speak to them in parables, because they look but do not see and hear but do not listen or understand”* (Matthew 13:13). By now we should know and understand that all the Gifts of the Holy Spirit are blended, overlapped, and complement each other. The more we study and learn, the more we get to understand Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is imperative that we study the Bible, participate fully in the Mass, attend meetings, read articles and books, and above all have a relationship with Jesus. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your heart, mind and soul to the Gift of Understanding.

Closing Prayer:

Come Holy Spirit. Fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth.

I can use this Gift by:



Reflections on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit *for Parents and Teens*

Counsel: Seeking Guidance by Asking the Holy Spirit's Intervention

Counsel has many different meanings as you will see by some of the following definitions stated in Webster's Dictionary:

1. Mutual exchange of ideas, opinions, etc.; discussion and deliberation;
2. Advice resulting from such an exchange;
3. Anyone whose advice is sought;
4. A lawyer or a group of lawyers giving advice about legal matters;
5. Wisdom or judgment.

The Holy Spirit can be anyone of the above. In using the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, we must open our hearts and mind to accept him and his counsel. The Holy Spirit is the love between the Father and the Son; it is the Third Divine Person of the Trinity.

The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus when he came out of the water during his baptism in the Jordan. It came in the form of a dove (Matthew 3:16). We, too, receive the Holy Spirit in our Baptism. Thus, we have him living in us and is always available if only we ask for counsel.

The Holy Spirit is our counsel in our afflictions, in our sorrows, in our doubts, in our everyday living.

In the Book of Wisdom, there is a lot of knowledge and understanding but one thing in particular stands out: *"Because he is found by those who test him not, and he manifests himself to those who do not disbelieve him. For perverse counsels separate a man from God, and his power, put to the proof, rebukes the foolhardy"* (Chapter 1:2-3). Because we seek counsel from the Holy Spirit, it does not mean that we can't turn to other sources for counsel as well; but, we must be very careful that whatever counsel we receive elsewhere is good counsel and not "perverse" as the verse above states.

In another verse, Wisdom 1:7 which states *"For the spirit of the Lord fills the world, is all embracing, and knows what man says."* is referring to the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit descends upon all and fills them with all the gifts including Counsel. Counsel is something that we seek from friends, relatives, doctors, parents, and many others; but, it is the Holy Spirit who will guide us into seeking the right and true counsel for it comes from God. It is the Holy Spirit who will move us in the right and proper direction if we listen and pay heed through our prayers and visits with our



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Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

There are many references to counsel in the bible, including:

- James addressing the twelve tribes of Israel and he has a lot of advice and counsel for them. For instance, in James 1:2-3 he states, *"Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance."*
- Isaiah 9:5 when we hear about a son to be born (reference here to Jesus the Messiah); *"For a child is born to us, a son is given us; upon his shoulder dominion rests. They name him Counselor, God Hero, Father forever, Prince of Peace."* Although in this verse Jesus is called Counselor; and, because the Holy Spirit is one in the same, then the Holy Spirit is truly a counselor as well.
- Proverbs 13: 10 states, *"The stupid man sows discord by his insolence; but with those who take counsel is wisdom."*

In the Old Testament and New Testament, there are many types of counsel but it all comes down to the one Counsel—the Holy Spirit.

Closing Prayer:

Come Holy Spirit. Fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth.

I can use this Gift by:



Reflections on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit *for Parents and Teens*

Fortitude: *Having the Strength to Stand Firm in the Faith*

Webster's dictionary defines *fortitude* as:

1. the strength to bear misfortune, pain, etc. calmly and patiently.
2. firm courage.

In defining *fortitude*, we must also define *strength* because they go together. *Strength* is defined in Webster's dictionary as:

1. the state or quality of being strong; force; power; vigor.
2. the power to resist strain, stress, etc.; toughness; durability.
3. the power to resist attack; impregnability.
4. legal, moral or intellectual force or effectiveness.

Our lives are faced with many moments of joy, pain and sorrow, afflictions, problems, torments, calamities, family struggles, deaths, etc.; and we need to call on the Holy Spirit to sustain us during any of these situations.

We also need to call on the Holy Spirit to give us the fortitude to deal with any and all situations in spite of how, when, why or what happened.

The first thing that comes to mind is death. All of us have experienced death at some point in our lives. Death of a loved one, friend, relative, or maybe even someone whom we did not know. Death affects people in different ways. Some express their sorrow outright while others keep it to themselves. How do you express sorrow?

Jesus was tormented because of his impending death. He was in the garden called Gethsemane. He went there to pray. His disciples were with him but he prayed alone away from them. Mark 14:36 describes Jesus as saying, "*Abba, Father, all things are possible to you. take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will.*"

What agony Jesus must have suffered knowing that he was to suffer for you and me for the redemption of our sins. What a covenant he made with us—giving his Blood for our redemption. Jesus was asking the Father directly, but since the Holy Spirit is the Father, then, he, too was asking the Holy Spirit to let his cup (death) pass him by.



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Fortitude: *Having the Strength to Stand Firm in the Faith*

The Holy Spirit is always in us but we need to awake him so that he can give us strength and fortitude when situations in our lives arise. Sometimes when we are facing afflictions, we think that we can solve them by ourselves, but most often we can't, and should ask for God's help and assistance through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus performed many miracles throughout his ministry directly through the Father. He gave the Apostles the Holy Spirit by breathing on to them to receive the Holy Spirit. This reminds us of the breath of life given by God to Adam by breathing. This, too, was the Spirit of God although not referred to as the Holy Spirit. The Apostles were given new life to go into the world and perform as Jesus did—cure the sick, drive out demons, forgive sins or retain sins, baptize in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and to spread the Gospel (the Good News).

In our Baptism we, too, are given the Holy Spirit. In Baptism, we received the grace from God to die and rise to new life as Jesus did. We need the Holy Spirit to strengthen us in time of struggles and afflictions. We also need to call on the Holy Spirit to give us the fortitude to approach them with calmness and patience.

Jesus expressed fortitude with calm and patience during his trial before Pilate to the point that Pilate was amazed. In Mark 15: 3-5 The chief priests accused Jesus of many things. Again, Pilate questioned Him, *"Have you no answer? See how many things they accuse you of?"* (Mark 15:4). Jesus gave him no further answer, so Pilate was amazed.

I wonder if we could be so calm and patient as we face death! With the help of the Holy Spirit it is possible.



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Fortitude: *Having the Strength to Stand Firm in the Faith*

Closing Prayer:

Come Holy Spirit. Fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth.

I can use this Gift by:



Reflections on the Gift of the Holy Spirit *for Parents and Teens*

Knowledge: Following a Path to Heaven through Truths Revealed

Webster's dictionary defines *knowledge* as follows:

1. The act, fact, or state of knowing;
2. Acquaintance or familiarity (with a fact, place, etc.);
3. Acquaintance with facts; range of information, awareness, or understanding;
4. All that has been perceived or grasped by the mind; learning, enlightenment;
5. The body of facts, principles, etc. accumulated by mankind.

Again, we see that “knowledge” is also understanding and we can also state that wisdom plays a major role in it. Knowledge is something that we acquire and learn as we progress through life. It is something that we learn from many different sources and people. We gain knowledge through daily living, from the environment, from our schooling, from our work, from association with people, and so on.

Our first knowledge comes from our parents as we grow in their presence. They are the ones that teach right from wrong, how to behave, things to say and do; and, above all instruction in our faith. Of course, there are many in this world who do not have the opportunity to gain knowledge from parents because of some circumstance, culture, or war.

Adam and Eve had the greatest opportunity to learn and gain knowledge from our God; but, in their disobedience they squandered it by listening to the advise (counsel, if you will) from the serpent. What an opportunity they missed. It is no wonder that most people just do not like or care for snakes!

Their disobedience was the start of sin. Sin causes us to fail in so many things and follow the wrong paths in our lives. It is sin that sometimes causes our knowledge to waiver in the wrong direction.

This is not what Jesus wants. Jesus while on earth taught us many things through actions, words, and deeds. It is through the Holy Spirit that we must use our brains to gain the knowledge that Jesus wanted us to understand and follow in his ways.

In everything that Jesus said or did was a lesson for us—a lesson in understanding—to gain knowledge as to who he was, is, and will always be. Through the parables, we



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Knowledge: *Following a Path to Heaven through Truths Revealed*

gain knowledge of right and wrong, mercy and love. Through prayer, especially the Our Father which he taught, gives us knowledge in sanctifying God, petitioning God for our daily bread, asking for his mercy by the forgiveness of our sins as we forgive others in the way that he did.

Just through this one prayer, Jesus says it all. If we learn to decipher the meaning behind the words, then we have gained knowledge in what Jesus has taught us through the Our Father.

The New Testament encompasses everything that we have to learn about life—living life and behavior (good and evil, right and wrong), and so much more. There is so much knowledge to be gained. There is so much to learn and it is continuous because almost every time one opens the Bible something new pops up in our thinking. The Holy Spirit is always moving and shaking us to learn and gain more knowledge.

In the Gospel of Matthew 18:21-35, “The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant,” Jesus is instructing us to be merciful but at the same time teaching us how to treat people. The master forgives the entire debt of one of his servants by showing mercy; however, the servant did not feel compassion for one of his servants and almost choked him and had him thrown in prison. This servant did not learn or obtain knowledge from the example shown by his master and consequently was punished himself and his entire family. We, too, sometimes fail to treat others in a merciful and compassionate manner. We need to learn and retain that knowledge. As we learn we accumulate knowledge.

Our Catholic faith offers us truths revealed through Jesus Christ during his life on earth and the Holy Spirit gives us the knowledge to know and accept these truths as we make our way to heaven and our heavenly Father to live in joy and happiness through all eternity.



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Knowledge: *Following a Path to Heaven through
Truths Revealed*

Closing Prayer:

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I can use this Gift by:



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Piety: Getting Closer to God Through Prayer and Service

Webster's dictionary defines *devotion* as:

1. the fact, quality or state of being devoted
2. piety; devoutness
3. religious worship
4. one or more prayers or other religious practices, specifically of a private or nonofficial kind
5. loyalty or deep affection
6. the act of devoting

As one can see from the above devotion has several meanings; however, in our Catholic faith piety or devotion can be summarized as being in love with God, worshipping God, servicing God. All of this is accomplished through the Holy Spirit. If we recall the Holy Spirit is the love between the Father and the Son and through him we are able to move, live and have our being to be able to love God and our neighbor.

When we as the people of God stay connected to God and stay in relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church, we are showing piety or devotion.

The people of God show and practice devotion in many ways. Some do it through prayer, attending Mass, praying the Rosary, novenas, and so on. Others are devoted through service in the vineyards of God—Works of Mercy, and the like. And, yet others are devoted through both. But all are showing and practicing the love of God and for God and neighbor.

Throughout the New Testament the Apostles were sincerely and deeply devoted to Jesus. Their love for Jesus was extraordinary and that is how we should be.

Aside from the Trinity, probably the greatest devotion for Catholics is to Mary. And even while we may devote ourselves to Mary, we always know that we pray to Jesus through Mary. Of course, Mary is not God, but in fact, our greatest intercessor. Devotion to Mary started in Genesis after the fall of Adam and Eve. In Genesis 3:15 is stated, *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers, He will strike at you head, while you strike at his feet."* Mary, the New Eve, through the power of God, was created sinless and without stain as she is the new Ark of the Covenant, which had to be pure and holy in order to carry our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Mary is the only woman to whom all the nations *"will call me blessed."*



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Piety: Getting Closer to God Through Prayer and Service

People have been devoted to the saints throughout the history of the Church. We petition the saints and the angels through prayer and devotion to them.

In the Old Testament, we see the chosen people of God, Israel, devoted to God but we also see their rejection of God and the return to the worship of foreign gods, such as Baal. However, when things get really bad for them they called on God to save them. Of course, God in his infinite goodness and mercy always come to their aid. So, even in the Old Testament we know that the Holy Spirit is working in the Israelites although the Spirit at that time was action of wind (Genesis 1:2 “the earth was a formless wasteland and darkness covered the abyss, while a mighty wind swept over the waters”), cloud, breath giving the Israelites power and return to devotion of the Lord.

Devotion can be evil instead of good. We can be devoted to power, lust, gold, pleasure or other devotion. It is then that we should call on the Holy Spirit to reverse our devotion to the good things of God—to turn away from sin.

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Reflections on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit for Parents and Teens

Fear of the Lord: Respect of the Lord in and Out of His Presence

Webster's dictionary defines *fear* as:

1. a feeling of anxiety and agitation caused by the presence or nearness of danger, evil, pain etc.;
2. timidity, dread, terror, fright, apprehension;
3. a feeling of uneasiness or apprehension, concern;
4. a cause for fear.

Pope Gregory the Great, wanting to capture the spiritual dynamism of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit stated the *"Through the fear of the Lord, we rise to piety, from piety then to knowledge, from knowledge we derive strength, from strength counsel, with counsel we move toward understanding, and with intelligence toward wisdom and thus, by the sevenfold grace of the Spirit, there opens to us at the end of the ascent the entrance to the life of Heaven."* (Homiliae in Hiezechihalem Prophetam, II 7, 7)

Fear of the Lord is often misinterpreted because of the word "FEAR." Fear of the Lord is not any form of punishment from God since he is a loving, forgiving, merciful, omnipotent, all knowing, etc. God. If he is all these things but above all of them he is LOVE, then why should we be afraid?

This type of fear should be a relationship with God—a filial type of fear that makes a person do the will of God. When we practice this type of fear we avoid sin (mortal and venial).

In the song, "Be Not Afraid," the Lord tells us do not be afraid for he will always be with us. Therefore, we should not do the will of God because we are afraid of punishment from him but simply because we love him. In Acts 8:18, it states that when Simon saw that the Spirit was conferred by the laying on of the Apostles hands, he offered them money and said, *"Give me this power too, so that anyone upon whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."* Peter said to Simon in Acts 8:20, *"May your money perish with you, because you thought that you could buy the gift of God with money."*

Maybe we too sometimes may try to get power through our action by trying to manipulate God. We are not to do that for we will get nothing. We need and should practice a virtuous life as the Catechism of the Church teaches as mentioned above, **"The moral life of Christians is sustained by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These are permanent dispositions which make man docile in following the promptings of the Spirit"** (CCC, 1830).



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So how do we as Christians practice and live in “Fear of the Lord?” There are many ways that we can do these two things which really go hand in hand.

First of all, we should not take God for granted. God loves us but we, too, must love him in return. We should not assume that God will accept us as we are; that is, for example continuing in a life of pleasure, power, money, lust, and so on. This is not what God wants of us. Therefore, we must strive to fall in love with God, our Savior. We must also be in love with him.

We can do this by establishing a true and loving relationship with our Lord. In doing so we attend Mass regularly, visit our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, pray the Rosary, communicate with God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit, do right, love goodness, and make every effort to walk humbly with God.

Jesus gave us the two greatest commandments:

1. You shall love the Lord your God with all you heart, and with all your soul, and with all you mind.
2. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

By observing these two commandments we observe the others as well for if we love God and our neighbor then we do not violate any of the commandments which God gave Moses. We can not only resurrect the Gifts of the Holy Spirit but pass those gifts by our works and the way we act and do.

The gift “fear of the Lord” allows us to perform the other gifts. This could be summed up in the following:

- Psalm 112:1—Happy the one who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commands.
- Psalm 128:1—Happy are all who fear the Lord, who walk in the ways of God.
- Sirach 1:14—The beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord, which is formed with the faithful in the womb.



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- Sirach 2: 15-17—Those who fear the Lord disobey not his words: those who love him keep his ways. Those who fear the Lord seek to please him, those who love him are filled with his law. Those who fear the Lord prepare their hearts and humble themselves before him.

So, let us follow in the ways of the Lord by allowing the Holy Spirit to come into our hearts and minds in order to move, live and have our being.

Closing Prayer:

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