



In All Things

The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6,7



Rideau Park United Church
Fall/Winter Project 2005
(Part II of the Surprised by Grace project)

Who am I?
What am I to do?
What is my purpose?
What is Love about?

Do you have lots of questions running through your mind? Do you struggle with decisions? Do you struggle with relationships and negative self talk? Do you struggle to hear God?

Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. *Matt. 7:7,8*

We all entertain some thoughts which are judgmental and unloving; the kind of thoughts which diminish our view of ourselves and others. We feel guilty when we recognize these harmful thoughts...the kind of thoughts that separate us from the knowledge of God's love.

...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control...If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. *Galatians 5:22,23,25*

We have been provided a means of returning to a right, loving relationship with God.

When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the father, he will testify on my behalf. You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

John 15:26,27

We know that Love is what Jesus Christ was all about—he taught us that a great Love is at the core of us all, and that it continues and extends beyond this world of struggle into the Light. He did not engage in the small-mindedness which is so prevalent in the world, but drew on eternal Truth to strengthen, support and lead him along his journey and teaching mission.

In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 1:13,14

We inhabit the same world in which Jesus lived. As followers of Christ we are called to rise above the questionable and varying morals of this world and reach out to an absolute Truth as a guide for our decision making.

The Holy Spirit wants to work with us to bring Love back into place in our lives. That is his job. While our main role in this life is to forgive (our neighbour, ourselves, etc.) the Holy Spirit is our helper along the way.

No request is too hard for the Holy Spirit. There is no degree of difficulty to the Holy Spirit where Love is intended. Love is our heritage, our treasure, our reality, hidden only by our choices. Love is God's unconditional gift.

We are weak-spirited people. Jesus knew that. That's why we were given the Holy Spirit. Where we are weak, God's Spirit gives us strength. We are but a prayer away from that strength. Where we think we can't, we are but a prayer from thinking we can. Where negative thoughts intrude, we are but a prayer away from peace.

God wants us to love and be loved and God has given us a helper to teach us how to do just that.

Instructions Along the Way

Calm down; calm your thoughts, calm your breathing. The Holy Spirit is your advocate, your friend. Ask first to be truly aware of the Holy Spirit's presence as you share your concern with God.

Bring all things to God in prayer (such as):

Sometimes we get so wrapped up in our feelings about a situation that we can't think straight. Look at those feelings blocking our view of love and hand them over to the Holy Spirit. The fears, judgments, insecurities will disappear as much as our intention is to be rid of them. Then, when your mind becomes clearer, ask for guidance to find the most loving solution to the situation.

If you have a character trait which prevents you from being loving to yourself or to others, speak about it. Offer yourself to be changed (healed) so that Love is able to be lived through you. (Remember that God gives us what we want, and if your intent is to utter a prayer, not believing it will help, nothing will change—that was your intent!) Healing will come when God sees your pure intention to change. Thank God.

If you are heading over to a friend's house and there has been a crisis in the family, you may be walking in fear. Make it your intent, through prayer, that the Holy Spirit be involved so that the most loving outcome will occur. (We perceive a very small part of a situation, the Holy Spirit sees the whole thing and works to bring a loving conclusion when asked.)

If you are carrying a heavy load of guilt, offer it to be healed. You **know** that **God forgives you**, ask for the strength to forgive yourself. Thank God for answering your prayer.

If you are trying to make a decision regarding the future, issue that concern in prayer, thanking God that the answer has been given even as you ask. Then seek it out.

Perhaps you are hosting a family event. In your prayer, state your intent that, with the help of the Holy Spirit, this event be as loving and enlivening as it can be. You'll be amazed by the beautiful outcome of such a prayer.

At church on Sunday, issue a prayer for the minister, that their words would be inspired, and that hearts in the congregation may be open to receive the message and be transformed by it. God works with our invitation to love.

Do you work with a difficult person? Bring each encounter with that person to the Holy Spirit in prayer. Be thankful in all things.

Is your faith in God weak? Ask the Holy Spirit to strengthen it. Ask and believe. It will be so.

Is there a gift of the Spirit that you dearly want? Peace? Patience? Put it in prayer and you will be well on your way to being blessed by it—again, only if you really desire it. God sees the difference between sincerity and wishes.

A Little Wisdom

To the Holy Spirit, there is no degree of difficulty in performing such "miracles". Every faithful call for loving help from the Holy Spirit, believing in his power, will have the effect of enabling Love to act. We can either ask to bring the kingdom into effect in the now moments, or slow down the process by not issuing the invitation.

(Prayers can be answered in surprising ways: through sentences in books, words in a movie, a passing comment, through nature, a still, small inner voice or a scripture passage. God uses many ways to speak Truth. If you don't know if God has answered, measure the perceived answer by the question: *Is it loving?*)

People are our mirrors. What we see in them reflects the same positive or negative attribute in ourselves. Consult the Holy Spirit to correct the unloving parts of yourself.

In all things, examine your motives, and if they are pure—searching for Truth, Love, Wisdom, communion with God, then those prayers will be answered. Be thankful.

You can't change anybody but yourself. You and the Holy Spirit can work together to heal you from the inside out. As you move to be close to God, your desire will be to serve God in thankfulness for God bringing you from the darkness into the Light.

Transformation can happen in an instant, but rarely does because we are attached to the "things" of this world and choose them over the true treasure in Christ Jesus.

With God's help, seek out someone to share your journey...someone like-minded who wants to know God better and to live a life blessed by fullness...someone who will pray for you and someone for whom you can pray.

Document your petitions, your prayers, your answers. Accept God's love. God helps us to leave confusion behind and embrace the Truth. In all things, seek God's inspiration.

Fill your grace diary with those lovely moments of learning to surrender to God's gracious way of living and loving. You'll know you are never alone. You'll find out there is nothing you have done that God doesn't forgive. We have been a mistaken people, but now the way is clear and we are learning to follow it with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Enjoy the journey!

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a