

**Children’s Moment**

Hello, girls and boys. Esperanza and I pray for you and your family. We love you and we appreciate you.

**What’s your favorite fruit?** Esperanza and I eat apples and oranges a lot, but we love mango a lot. When I was growing up, I loved to eat Ruby Red grapefruit.

My grandfather had a ¼-acre garden when I was growing up. I remember going out to pick corn, shucking it and eating it two minutes after it came off the stalk. Talk about fresh! He grew zucchinis that were as long as your forearm.

One of my grandfather’s goals was to grow a tomato so big that he could cover a whole slice of bread with one tomato slice. That’s big! Here’s a picture of our tomatoes – we have more than ten growing now. We’re growing cherry tomatoes, so they’re smaller and sweeter. But they are good fruit.

No matter what kind of fruit you like, all of them are good. They are enjoyable. That’s why Jesus calls us fruit. When we are connected to Jesus, our true vine, and we grow, we create all sorts of things that Jesus enjoys.

Some of you love to dance or sing. God loves that and so do we. Some of you love learning in school. God loves that and so do we. Some of you love taking care of pets and plants. God loves that and so do we. Most of all, when you are kind, caring, patient and helpful, that’s when God loves you most because you’re just like Jesus.

That’s what we enjoy. And your parents, grandparents, sisters and brothers, and friends enjoy it too. It’s just like eating our favorite fruit, only this fruit is called love. No matter what you like to do, just be yourself and do your best. Don’t worry about what others do. Enjoy yourself and God will love it!

*Please pray with me: Lord, thank you for enjoying us for who we are. Help us to grow and be who you made us to be. In Jesus’ name, amen.*

**You are invited to be part of Sunday School online.** Visit us at [www.coronaumc.com/childrensministry](http://www.coronaumc.com/childrensministry) to sign up.

**Message: “Power of Faith”**

**Clarence Hall, a World War II correspondent, gave a remarkable testimony a number of years ago.** He wrote, “I can never think of the boons and benefits that the Bible invariably brings without thinking of Shimmabuke, a tiny village I came upon as a war correspondent in Okinawa.

**Thirty years before,** an American missionary en route to Japan had stopped there just long enough to make two converts - Shosei Kina and his brother Mojon. He left a Bible with them and moved on. For thirty years they had no contact with any other Christian missionary, but they made the Bible come alive!

**They taught the other villagers until every man, woman, and child in Shimmabuke became a Christian.** Shosei Kina became the headman of the village, and Mojon the chief teacher. In the school the Bible was read daily. The precepts of the Bible were law in the village.

**In those thirty years there a Christian democracy in its purest form developed.** When the American army came to the island, an advance patrol swept up to the village compound with guns leveled.

**The two old men stepped forth, bowed low and began to speak.** An interpreter explained the old men were welcoming the Americans as fellow Christians!

**The flabbergasted GIs sent for their chaplain.** He came with officers of the Intelligence Service. They toured the village. They were amazed at the spotlessly clean homes and streets, and the gentility of the inhabitants. The other Okinawan villages they had seen were filled with people who were living in poverty.

**Clarence later walked through Shimmabuke with a tough army sergeant.** The sergeant said, ‘I can't figure it out - this kind of people coming from a Bible and a couple of old guys who wanted to live like Jesus Christ. Maybe we have been using the wrong kind of weapons to make the world over!’”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.uu.edu/centers/rglee/fellows/fall98/james.htm#:~:text=In%20Acts%201%3A1%2C%20you,brother%20in%20Christ%20to%20Luke.>

**This is an old story, but it shows us an important truth.** Faith in Jesus Christ has the power to transform the world as we know it! The simplest of things can have great power when faith is involved.

**Here's a good example: Theophilus.** Theophilus is mentioned twice in the New Testament. Once at beginning of Luke and then at the beginning of Acts. He has a Roman name. We don't know much other than he was Luke's patron, which is like a mentor or sponsor. The reason I mention it is to point out how Luke's address changes. Luke addresses Theophilus formally in the first books, but the text in Acts implies a change in their relationship. It's like Theophilus is now a believer and Luke is writing to a friend. More than 25% of New Testament is made up of Luke's letters to his friend!

**Think about that.** Luke wasn't writing to fill an editorial requirement. No one was saying, "Hurry up, we're holding space for you in the Bible!" Luke wrote a long letter to a mentor and friend to help them know who he knew: Jesus and his followers. I certainly expect Luke intended others to read the letter, but he wrote with one person as the intended audience, his mentor and friend.

**Have you ever heard seen the power of multiplication?**

One of the most famous illustrations comes from India. The Museum of Natural Science in Chicago pays homage on one wall where there is a checkerboard with 64 squares. In the lower left-hand corner is a grain of wheat. The display includes this question: "If you doubled the amount of wheat as you move from square to square, how much would you have when you reached the 64<sup>th</sup> square? A carload? A trainload? You would have enough wheat to cover the country of India six feet deep."

**That's the power of multiplication.** Suppose you go out and reach one person for Jesus. Stay with that person for a year. Help, encourage and strengthen them. At the end of a year there are two believers. Now, if both of you go and share with another person over the next year, at the end of the second year there are four of you. In 3 years, there are eight people and in four years, 16.

**Here's an interesting note: in the five years we've spent together, 65 people from 19 families have joined our church!**

**Do you know how many people there would be if 20 of you invited someone to know Jesus and you spent a year connecting with them?**

In one year, we'd have twenty new people. If the same 20 people continued to invest in others and the twenty new people followed along, in a year there could be 400 new people involved in our congregation. Stop and think about what you can do!

**That's the power of the Holy Spirit at work.** It's what faith can do. But it doesn't happen accidentally. It doesn't happen if our attention is focused on waiting for God to do to work, for God to right our perceived wrongs. It happens when we focus on who Jesus is, what he calls us to do and how he gives us the best person in all of creation to help us.

**Jesus is the central figure in the four Gospel accounts, but the Holy Spirit is central in the book of Acts.** The book of Acts has been called “The Acts of the Holy Spirit.” Luke's second book begins with Jesus' reminder of his pre-Resurrection promise to send his followers the Holy Spirit. *“This is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now”* (Acts 1:4b-5).

In John's gospel, Jesus spoke extensively about the coming promised Holy Spirit. Jesus told the disciples:

*“I will not leave you orphaned”* (John 14:18a).

*“... the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom [God] will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you”* (14:26).

*“When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from [God], the Spirit of truth who comes from [God], will testify on my behalf”* (15:26).

*“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth...”* (16:13a).

In Acts, Jesus reminds his followers the promised Holy Spirit is coming with these words, *“... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth”* (Acts 1:8).

**This as an affirmation of the Great Commission Jesus gave the disciples**, as recorded by Matthew, *“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I’ve commanded you. Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age”* (Matthew 28:19-20).

**The message is clear.** The Holy Spirit is at work in us, helping us to invite people to know Jesus. The Holy Spirit connects us together in relationships and in ministry. And, best of all, the Holy Spirit prompts us to get involved, to engage in caring for people in our neighborhoods and one another.

**One, final thought.** The name Theophilus means “friend of God” or “loved by God.” That describes a lot people. God loves all people. Sadly, most people don’t hear that through the noise of other voices that drown out the good news of Jesus.

**Who is your Theophilus?** There’s someone in your home, neighborhood, community or network of friends and acquaintances who is open to hearing about the good news of Jesus. Make a friend. Spend some time with them. Let God’s grace flow through you and trust the Holy Spirit. When it’s right, invite them to join us online. You’ll be glad you did. And you will truly be a disciple of Jesus Christ, following him on the way that leads to life.

To God be the glory! Amen.

**Acts 1:1-11 (CEB)**

Theophilus, the first scroll I wrote concerned everything Jesus did and taught from the beginning, right up to the day when he was taken up into heaven. Before he was taken up, working in the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus instructed the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he showed them that he was alive with many convincing proofs. He appeared to them over a period of forty days, speaking to them about God’s kingdom. While they were eating together, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for what the Father had promised. He said, “This is what you heard from me: John baptized with water, but in only a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

As a result, those who had gathered together asked Jesus, “Lord, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now?”

Jesus replied, “It isn’t for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has set by his own authority. Rather, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

After Jesus said these things, as they were watching, he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going away and as they were staring toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood next to them. They said, “Galileans, why are you standing here, looking toward heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you saw him go into heaven.”