

Ministry Gives Vibrant Evidence of Holy Spirit's Miraculous Work

Donna Sparks signed in at the Carroll County Jail in Huntingdon, Tennessee, and went into the auditorium to set up for that night's ministry, and there she waited. And waited. And waited. What was going on?

She waited at least 30 minutes, and still no one came. She shares the complete story on her blog, one of the many examples of the Holy Spirit's wonder-working power to which Sparks' life and ministry bear witness.

That week, Sparks writes, she found herself buried beneath graduation and party planning for her youngest daughter, government issues and meetings, counseling, speechwriting, shopping and more—and she still had to clean her house by the end of the week. She felt stressed, nervous about her youngest girl graduating and just plain tired. So when Tuesday evening crept up, and with it severe weather, she considered forfeiting that week's women's prison ministry meeting.

The ladies will understand with all I have on my plate, she thought. They won't expect me in such stormy weather. And what if the jail loses power? We wouldn't be able to have the service anyway. On top of all the work and worrisome weather, Sparks suffered from a stress headache that would not relent. It would be a good evening to go home, rest and focus on the remainder of her long to-do list.

"But I couldn't do it," she writes. Experience taught her that when she really didn't feel like going to an engagement, and especially when the enemy's influences presented a surplus of excuses to stay away, something big was going to happen.

With all this in mind, "I loaded up the projector, my laptop, speaker and my Bible, and off to the jail I went," Sparks writes. "It was going to be a sacrifice, but I know God honors our sacrifices."

As she waited in the empty auditorium, wondering if it had all been a waste of time, she pressed the intercom button and asked if any of the women were coming to church. The reply came back, "Yes, we are getting them ready right now."

Baptism in the Spirit

Sparks says when the familiar buzzer sounded, the door opened, and the women entered. This was a bigger group than the previous week, but it only consisted of 10 or so women.

Sparks greeted her guests, and they started the worship service. "The whole time I was praying and asking the Holy Spirit to lead me and give me the words to speak," she writes. "I had no idea what I was going to speak on but I knew He knew what the ladies needed to hear."

Sparks began to preach by the power of the Holy Spirit, and before she knew it, the women were weeping. She gave an altar call to accept Christ, and six ladies responded. They prayed, repented and asked Jesus to be Lord of their lives.

But God wasn't finished, and "He never fails," Sparks writes. She encouraged the women to read the first two chapters of Acts and told them they would discuss the baptism in the Holy Spirit the following week. She started the music and invited any woman who needed prayer to come forward. One by one, they came. While she prayed for the first young woman, the Holy Spirit revealed some truths about her life. As Sparks spoke the words He gave her, the woman trembled and wept tears of joy.

"I immediately felt that I should ask her if she wanted to be baptized in the Holy Spirit," Sparks writes. "She said, 'Yes!

I want everything God has for me!'"

Again, Sparks prayed with her, and the moment she placed her hand on the woman's forehead, this brand-new believer spoke in tongues. "It was flowing out of her like a river. She was rejoicing and crying and could hardly stand," Sparks writes, adding that since the woman had only given her heart to Christ moments before, she "probably didn't even understand what the baptism in the Holy Spirit was, but she simply wanted more of Jesus."

The next woman came forward and said, "Miss Donna, I want what she got!" Sparks says. They giggled together, and the Holy Spirit gave Sparks words meant only for this woman. She, too, began to weep, and before Sparks could even put her hand on this woman's head, she fell under the power of the Holy Spirit. When Sparks helped her up, this woman was also speaking in tongues and ran to grab a friend from the back of the room. "Give it to her too!" she told Sparks.

Sparks told the woman and her friend that Jesus, not Sparks, was the baptizer in the Holy Spirit, and if she wanted the gift, to reach out her hands to Him to receive it. Sparks prayed for her and gently placed her hand on the woman's head. The Spirit moved, and this woman also spoke in tongues. "Now, both of these girls were jumping up and down and praising Jesus," Sparks writes.

Then another woman came forward and asked to receive as well. Within moments, she also was praying in tongues and weeping with joy. The power and presence of God flooded the jail auditorium, thick and tangible. "One of the ladies said it felt like electricity in the air," Sparks writes, adding that another had goosebumps from the moment she walked into the auditorium.

As Sparks prayed with one of the women, she discerned the woman's calling as a worship leader. The woman said, "My dad

was a worship leader, and there's nothing in this world I would rather do," Sparks writes, adding that she told her she would lead worship next week. The woman's excitement was uncontrollable as her Spirit-birthing tears flowed.

That night, Sparks prayed with other women and saw an abundance of healing, emotionally and physically, take place. "I was reminded why I must always press on, especially when I don't feel like it," she writes.

Tears streamed down Sparks' own face as she sat in the parking lot after that service, knowing God's supernatural work had nothing to do with her. "The Holy Spirit longs to draw sinners to Christ," she writes. "It's not by any strength or ability we possess but by the wonderful, breathtaking power of the Holy Spirit."

"This is what revival looks like," Sparks adds. "When people realize God's love for them, and they understand their immense need for a Savior, then we begin to experience revival."

Story of Grace

The Spirit-filled night of revival in the jail auditorium, of women hungering with a desperation for Jesus above all, is just one of countless testimonies of the Holy Spirit's power at work in and through Sparks' life and ministry.

Sparks, an evangelist and author, founded Story of Grace Jail Ministry in 2015, per her website. She began ministering in the Decatur County Jail when she took over the jail ministry at her church in Decaturville, Tennessee. As time went on, her team not only ministered in the Decatur County Jail but also those in Carroll and Henry County.

At this time, only the Carroll County Jail has resumed normal operations post-pandemic, but Sparks and her team once more are bringing the transforming presence of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit to broken women there in need of His grace.

They have helped countless women find salvation through Jesus Christ, witnessing miraculous healing and baptisms in the Holy Spirit.

The team partners with rehab centers such as Teen Challenge, The Hope Center and facilities like the Dream Center in Jackson, Tennessee, to help the ladies step into the new lives birthed during their incarceration. Story of Grace recognizes the importance of building relationships with these beautiful women and getting them into appropriate aftercare programs. "We have seen God do the miraculous behind prison doors, and we know He's not done," Sparks writes on her website.

Sparks has a tender heart toward broken women and longs to see them walk in the freedom and purpose of God. Filled with compassion, she understands what it's like to feel broken beyond repair, hopeless toward the future.

Beauty From Ashes

Sparks grew up in church, she shares in her book *Beauty From Ashes*. Her parents ensured she and her brother were there any time the doors were opened. She gave her life to the Lord at the early age of 9, and she lived to please her Savior. She sought Him and daily made decisions based on His truth and standards throughout her teenage years and early adult life.

But when life got hard, Sparks' faith faltered. At the age of 23, she found herself divorced—twice. With anger festering in her heart, she felt disappointed in herself and disappointed with God. She explains how easy it can be to yield to deceptive influences when you stop listening to His still, small voice. "Satan's intent is to steal us away from our Savior, kill the relationships we have with Christ and totally destroy us," she writes.

As Sparks sat in her anger, ignoring the voice of the Spirit, Satan's deceitful devices took root. He whispered, "What has God done for you? You would be better off doing things your

own way. God hasn't done a very good job with your life so far."

As she entertained these thoughts, her bitterness toward God only grew, Sparks writes. The distance she created between herself and her Savior caused a void that nothing could fill. She turned to alcohol and partying, and a destructive cycle of drinking drove her further into depression.

Sparks writes about how, around this time, she encountered a new co-worker, Bryan. Not a believer, he still lived a more moral life than she did at the time, she says. Although he didn't drink or do drugs, he didn't judge her lifestyle.

After dating for two months, the two married. The first year was a nightmare, she says. Her drinking led to many arguments. This created a deeper downward spiral, and she drank more and more.

About three years into their marriage, she learned that she was likely infertile, Sparks explains. The news sent her deeper into depression's void. At one point, she had a panic attack and was prescribed antidepressant medication and Xanax. With her addictive personality, this proved a dangerous combination.

Feeling hopeless and worthless, Satan fed her lie after lie that ultimately led to suicidal thoughts—and a miraculous rescue straight from heaven. Read *Beauty From Ashes* to see God's redemptive rewriting of her story.

Miracles Without Limit

Sparks knows the power of God has no limits; not only has she witnessed this in her own life, but she has also seen miracle after miracle manifest through the power of the Holy Spirit, she tells Charisma Digital.

One woman struggled to get through the door for the worship

service without help, Sparks says. Excruciating pain shot through her foot and up her back, but she pushed through to enter the presence of Jesus. As Sparks and the incarcerated women lost themselves worshipping the Savior, she heard someone yell, "I love You, Jesus!"

It was the hurting woman, now jumping up and down. Tears trickled down her face, but not tears of sorrow. A heat swept over her while she was worshipping, and the pain left, Sparks explains. No one laid a hand on her. The presence of Jesus touched her as she was pouring out her praise, eradicating her suffering.

Sparks documents many other contemporary miraculous acts of God in her book *No Limits: Embracing the Miraculous* (Bridge-Logos, 2019). In a recent interview with Dr. Steve Greene on the Greenelines podcast on the Charisma Podcast Network, she says she could already write a sequel because she continues to see God doing the impossible.

Sparks hopes *No Limits* inspires believers to continue trusting God and believing for miracles in their own lives. She also encourages them to take His Good News to others who may need faith to believe. Though the powers of this world work to convince people God does not exist, much less work miracles, *No Limits* stirs and strengthens the faith of those who need hope. Sparks' most recent book, *Masquerade: Deception in the Last Days* (Bridge-Logos, 2020), unmask the lies that disguise themselves as truth and reach us through Satan and worldly influences that twist the truth and water down the Word of God.

"I believe we are in a generation where God is raising up people to move with the gifts of the Holy Spirit," Sparks tells Greene. "And you know, I'm seeing it, and I'm living it."

To learn more about Donna Sparks, her Story of Grace prison

ministry and any of her books, visit .

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