

March Madness
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Say "March Madness" and everyone knows what you're talking about. The NCAA Basketball Championship fills the minds of fans and the sports channels on TV. March madness is a strange mixture of cheers and tears. Wins and losses are determined in split seconds leaving fans in the arena shouting for joy or crying in pain. Such is life.

Every tournament singles out one or two teams that are dubbed a Cinderella team. Some have unexpected, unlooked-for strings of victories; some go beyond their individual abilities to teamwork; and suddenly, a team destined for the dumpster is sitting on top.

We love these Cinderella teams (except maybe when they beat our favorite teams!) They make us feel like the little guy can still win, that the richest and the biggest don't always get their own way in the world. Even if it's a team from a school we've never heard of, or one of those new pro franchises we can't quite locate geographically, suddenly the Cinderella team becomes the team to cheer for, to hope for, to invest in.

If ever there was a Cinderella team in history, it had to be the Jesus team known as The Twelve. These disciples never appear to grasp any coherent vision, understanding, outlook, or expectations. They were not what you'd think of as first team material.

But this group of diverse individuals made up of zealots, tax collectors, and fishermen came together to be evangelists, teachers, and missionaries; becoming a Dream Team that changed the world.

How? By the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit came upon this simple and complex group of minimally gifted individuals and empowered them to share the word of God to people of many nations in the native language of those people.

That's what we are called to do. People are enriched when they hear the Word of God in words they can understand.

When we are communities founded in the Spirit, we are united by that experience and for that ministry; even when our style of worship is different and our diversities remain intact. Instead of only seeking out those with similar cultures, languages, experiences, and attitudes, the Holy Spirit comes to create community out of the multiplicity that is humanity.

In common language, that means we are all one in the Spirit, one in the Lord; and we pray that all unity will one day be restored, and they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love. Yes they'll know we are Christians by our love.