



GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

Week I: Power from On High

MEET

Sample Icebreaker Question:

What was the best gift you received at Christmas, and why?

MAGNIFY

Suggest Song(s):

Thank You for the Cross (Hillsong)

Dare to Believe (Charlie and Jill LeBlanc)

MESSAGE

We need power from on high to live as witnesses for Jesus (Acts 1:8). One of the biggest dangers for any church is to live as if the Holy Spirit is not even real! William Booth said that Christianity without the Holy Spirit was the greatest challenge to the church. And yet, even in charismatic, so called Spirit-filled churches there can be many people who have never been filled with the Spirit, or even if they have been, do not ever flow in the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit and are not really witnesses to Jesus in this world.

I preached at a church of over 300 people a number of years ago – it was famous as a Pentecostal, tongue-talking church – but the Lord led me to preach on the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Over half the church came forward to receive the Holy Spirit baptism and speak in tongues! Yet in Acts 2, God had a tongue of fire for every single head, and in every occasion in which people receive the Spirit in the book of Acts every single person is filled and speaks in tongues.

Today in the Living Church, we want to affirm that God's will for every single Christian is that they receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues. This is not the same things as becoming a Christian – this is a different thing:

When you become a Christian you are born again. Your human spirit is transformed from death to life, from sin to righteousness. The Holy Spirit transforms your spirit but He does not live inside you at this stage. Jesus compares this event (in John 4) to having a well put inside you that never runs dry. And this new birth is awesome – you can receive healing from that well, you can walk in peace with that well inside you, you can do all things through that well inside you. Whatever the problem just dig deep inside and access the same power that raised Christ from the dead: a reborn, righteous human spirit.

However, Jesus told Christians that this was not enough. Paul asked the disciples in Ephesus if they had received the Holy Spirit since they believed (Acts 19:1-5), and we need to ask the same question of every single Christian: have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed? If not, you need to. You need to believe and receive the Holy Spirit into your life. It will, according to Jesus, give you the power to be a witness. It will open up all the gifts in I Cor. 12 to you, and will give you a special language that only God can understand, and every time you speak in that language it will comfort and strengthen you (I Cor. 14:3).

So, if you have been filled with the Spirit and you do speak in tongues then today is a good day to think about that experience, and thank God for it, and consider: at times where you are down and discouraged – do you encourage yourself in the Spirit by speaking in tongues? If not, then think about your upcoming week and consider how you could spend some time speaking in tongues and building yourself up in God and encouraging yourself.

For those of you, who are not filled with the Spirit, please do not be nervous. It's not spooky or weird; it's the power of God flooding into your spirit. It's awesome. The Bible says out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks, so when the Spirit fills your heart it's not surprising Spirit words come forth. All you have to do is speak them out and you will never be the same again.

I break down the process of receiving the Holy Spirit into five steps. This is not to mystify the experience, but to make it easy for everyone and anyone to receive the Holy Spirit.

- I. Ensure you are a Christian. The Holy Spirit can only live in righteous, transformed spirits so firstly ensure you are born again in the Spirit by believing that Jesus is resurrected from the dead and confessing that He

is Lord = that Jesus is God (Romans 10.9-10). By doing this your human spirit is transformed from death to life, from sin to righteousness – and you are now ready to receive the Holy Spirit and the power of God.

2. Believe that God has already poured out the Holy Spirit because of Jesus. You are not about to be filled because you are good enough, but because Jesus has poured His living spirit into your spirit transforming it into pure righteousness. No one has ever been good enough to receive the Holy Spirit – only because of Jesus can we have this gift.
3. Thank God for pouring out His Spirit and tell the Father that you accept the Spirit into your life (see Luke 11.13 for a beautiful promise about this).
4. Now you need to stop speaking in English. No one in the world is smart enough to speak two languages at once – so stop saying “praise God” and praying in English. This is so important – so many people fail to receive the Holy Spirit because they will not stop talking in their learned language!
5. Finally, listen to the Holy Spirit that is now living inside you. He is desperate to flow out of you and change the world. Syllables will come to you – maybe only one syllable, it is about stepping out in faith. For some people they hear them in their head, for others in their heart, for others right in their belly. If you read Acts 2.4 it says clearly that “they spoke in tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance”. So the Holy Spirit will give you the words, but you need to speak them out. Again – it might only be a syllable or two, but step out and speak those words out no matter how silly they sound. Your mouth is not used to being the direct voice of the Spirit, but get used to it because that will open the door to all the gifts of the Spirit.

Next week we will look at the value of tongues and how speaking in tongues can help you in so many different situations.

Questions:

1. What is the power of the Holy Spirit for?
(Power to be witnesses)
2. How many people in Acts 2 spoke in tongues after being filled with the Holy Spirit?
(All of them)
3. Who gave the people in Acts 2 the words to say, and who actually spoke the words?
(The Holy Spirit gave the words, but the people had to speak them themselves)

4. If you are baptised in the Holy Spirit, could you possibly tell your story of how it happened to you? (allow maybe 1-3 people to answer)
5. On Sunday when Benjamin was preaching on the different times in Acts of people getting baptised in the Spirit (you may want to look at Acts 2.1-4, Acts 8.5-17, Acts 9.1-17, Acts 10.34-end, Acts 19.1-7), was there anything that surprised or challenged or inspired you?
6. What in your own words, is the difference between the new birth and the baptism of the Holy Spirit?
(e.g. new birth is getting saved, baptism in Holy Spirit is getting the power; New Birth is for righteousness, BHS is for witnessing; new birth is for our own benefit, BHS is to benefit those around us)
7. Why do you think so many churches do not teach on the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit?
8. Benjamin said on Sunday that “after the decision to be saved, the most important decision you will ever make on earth is that to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit”. Do you agree, and why or why not?

MINISTRY

Clearly the main focus of the ministry time will be those people (if any) who need to receive the Holy Spirit.

One of the most effective ways to enable people to start speaking out in tongues for the first time is to play some music and then encourage those in the room who do speak in tongues to do at normal talking volume so that no-one feels embarrassed that everyone is watching them and waiting.

Follow the five steps above and believe that they will start speaking in tongues. It's a very exciting thing to happen because you know that person is never going to be the same again.

In addition, there may be people who haven't spoken in tongues for a long time, or who haven't quite been able to pray without feeling stupid or without a certain atmosphere. Encourage those people to pray more regularly and minister to them.