

Gifts
OF THE
Spirit

**SMALL GROUP
STUDY**

GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

INTRODUCTION



We are currently in a year of encounter as we, as a church and as individuals, are making a renewed effort to draw near to the heart of God, going deeper in relationship with Jesus and each other and seeking to respond faithfully to what He says so we can fulfil our vision of **'Reaching Ryedale for Jesus'**.

As part of this year-long journey, at the beginning of October we started our second major teaching series of the year, for our Sunday morning gatherings entitled **'The Gifts of the Spirit'** based around the Scripture found in 1 Corinthians 12 .

The truth is, in order to have any chance of fulfilling the vision of 'Reaching Ryedale for Jesus', in order to see people come to faith, it will require from us much more than the skills and capabilities that we naturally have, it will need something more substantial - supernatural even.

The good news is that God has a variety of special gifts, that He wants to bestow on us from prophecy, to wisdom, to speaking in tongues, discernment, words of knowledge, faith, apostleship, administration, acts of service and teaching; to name a few!

The gifts aren't given to be used for our own agendas, but rather in order that we might build up the church, bring glory to God and to effectively reach out to our communities and point them to Jesus. 1 Corinthians 12 verse 7 says: ***"Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."***

No follower of Jesus is excluded from receiving these gifts from the Holy Spirit, however what gifts we receive will depend on how the Holy Spirit wants to apportion them. 1 Corinthians 12 verse 11 says it like this: ***"All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He distributes them to each one, just as He determines"***.

I look forward to you joining me on this journey.

Best Wishes

Pastor Steve

GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

SESSION 4 - FAITH



In the fourth and final session of our Gifts of the Spirit studies, we are going to look at the gift of FAITH.

OPENING QUESTIONS

- How would you define faith?
- What does it practically look like for you to have faith in God from day to day?
- Describe a time when you had to take a step of faith, how did it make you feel? Did it hold you back? Or did you push forward? Share your experience.

READ: HEBREWS 11 v 1

Faith is central to Christianity, the Bible tells us in Hebrews 11 verse 6 ***“And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him.”***

Faith is what helps us to keep going when we want to give up, it’s what draws us to the heart of God, it’s what gives us hope to believe for the impossible, even when everyone else tells you it won’t happen - because we serve a God of the impossible! Faith requires us to look beyond what we can see with our natural eyes and have complete trust in God, believing He has our best interests at heart.

As Jeremiah 29 verse 11 says ***“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”***

As followers of Jesus we are called to live by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5 v 7). We are called to live a new life in Christ that is no longer our own, dying to our own desires. As Galatians 2 verse 20 says ***“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”***

Having faith day to day also requires us to be committed to our relationship with God, spending time in His presence, worshipping Him and reading His word and being obedient to what God tells us. It also requires us to put our faith into action with the world around us. Because ***“faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead”*** (James 2 v 26).

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There are also strategic moments in our lives when God will require us to take a huge step out of our comfort zone - where we will need to trust that God has got our back - even when we can't see the answer, or know how things will turn out.

Peter had one of those moments - **READ: MATTHEW 14 v 22 - 33**

When I look back on my own life there have been moments where God has asked me to step out of the comfort of the boat, just like He did with Peter. There have been many different occasions, sometimes I have obeyed and in other times, to my shame, I have shrunk away.

But one of the biggest times I experienced God's call to step out of the boat was when God made it very clear after finishing my Minister in Training time in Nottingham - He wanted me to take the step of leading my own church. Is that a really big thing, you might ask? Well, yes and no! I had never led a church before so that was a huge step but at the same time I was prepared and ready. What I wasn't ready for was what God said next - He told me in January that He wanted me to leave in the July even if we didn't have a church lined up and asked us to trust He would work it out. It was a REAL step of faith. Naturally speaking it was a crazy idea, you don't do that, you wait for a church to become available whilst in your current post. However, Erika and I felt very strongly that God was wanting to test our levels of faith. Months went by with very little progress, then our last Sunday quickly arrived and there was no opportunity in sight but we left as God called us to.

Erika got a job as a temp teacher, I started to clean student houses - all the while seeking to trust God but naturally having moments of doubt. *'Have we made a huge mistake?'* Around 4 months later, a call came in for an interview at Guildford and the rest is history!

So, what did I learn? Patience, trust and that when God says something, it will come to pass - despite what you may feel or what people tell you (and I had a fair few people say that I had made a wrong choice!) Amazingly, what I found out later when everything was settled, was that me and the old pastor at Guildford had left our positions at the exact same time. I was always in line for an interview, but they wanted to give some space between appointments. I believe it was no coincidence - God wanted to teach us something in those moments that we couldn't learn by staying put ... and in my experience He always does!

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Is there a difference between faith and the Gift of Faith? Explain your answer.
- What characteristics mark a person who has the Gift of Faith?
- In what ways can the Gift of Faith have a positive impact on the life of the church?

There are three different types of faith that the Bible talks about:

First of all there is **Saving Faith**

This is given to everyone so that they can acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Ephesians 2 verses 8 - 9 says: ***“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.”***

Secondly, **Personal Faith**

This is the faith that is the day to day faith that we talked about earlier, as we learn to trust in God, build relationship with Him, learn to obey His commands and produce fruit that makes us more like Jesus. Proverbs 3 verses 5 - 6 ***“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding but in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.”***

The third type of faith is the **Gift of Faith**

This differs from the other two as it is not given to everyone, but is given to believers as the Holy Spirit desires - 1 Corinthians 12 verse 11 says: ***“All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He distributes them to each one, just as He determines.”***

The Gift of Faith is different to normal day-to-day faith, in that a person is endowed with a strong belief and confidence in God during a specific moment or season, where their faith rises to supernatural levels and they believe for things that in the natural realm seem impossible - they believe that God can and will make the impossible, possible, because of the trust that they have in His power and presence to change things.

READ: DANIEL 3 v 8 - 25

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The Scripture we have just read tells us the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who had the Gift of Faith in spades as they went against King Nebuchadnezzar's decree to bow down and worship his idol. They showed the Gift of Faith in standing up against him having total confidence that God would save them from the fiery furnace (and even if He didn't, they would not worship the king). The result was they were thrown in the furnace but they were unscathed, not even a hair on their head was singed! God pulled them through ... what a great example of the Gift of Faith in operation.

Those who have the Gift of Faith carry certain characteristics - they don't take no for an answer, their faith is not complicated but is real and true. They are humble, not drawing attention to themselves but pointing people to God. They are bold and fearless in what they ask God for and what they believe He can do. Even more importantly, they expect God will do it! Quite simply, they live the truth found in Matthew 19 verse 26 when Jesus said ***"With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."***

A person with the Gift of Faith is important to the body of Christ for a number of reasons:

1. The Gift of Faith in operation can cause faith and expectation to rise in the body of Christ.
2. The Gift of Faith can bring joy and comfort to others, showing people that God is present and in control.
3. The Gift of Faith grows the church body. As a result of this gift in operation, we will see answers to prayer, healings and miraculous signs that can only deepen a believer's faith.
4. It shows society that God is alive, working and moving today. Without the Gift of Faith in operation the church might as well be DEAD!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are the challenges of having the Gift of Faith?
- Do you think we need the Gift of Faith to be in operation in order to see other gifts such as miracles or healings taking place? Explain your thoughts.
- Have you ever experienced the Gift of Faith, either in a personal situation or church context? What was the situation and what happened?

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The Gift of Faith is one of many of God's gifts to His church, it is an amazing gift but like all the gifts it's important to be aware of the dangers that a believer might encounter. A person must handle it with care, making sure they don't abuse it; using it for prideful reasons like showmanship or personal gain because it will not end well, if so. It should always be used with love, to edify the church, to bring glory to God and to build His kingdom, anything else is worthless and will get you into a whole heap of trouble.

The Gift of Faith is not just a stand alone gift - it's just about having confidence in the midst of trials, choosing to obey whatever God says, even when it seems ridiculous or having the faith to believe God will provide for your financial needs. The Gift of Faith stretches further, it is also one that plays an important support role in other spiritual gifts like healing and miracles.

When we talk about healing in the context of the laying on of hands, it requires two things; prayer and the Gift of Faith to work in unison together and then God does the rest. James 5 verses 13 - 15 says: ***"Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone happy? He should sing songs of thanks to God. Is anyone among you sick? He should send for the church leaders and they should pray for him. They should pour oil on him in the name of the Lord. The prayer given in faith will heal the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven."***

All believers in Jesus have a different level of faith, dependent upon the journey we have experienced so far. Having faith in God is key to helping us to pray for others, deepening and growing in our relationship with Him and becoming more like Him as the resulting faith produces fruit in our lives.

Yet for some there will be moments or seasons when God may choose to give us the Gift of Faith, which supernaturally empowers us to believe for things that go beyond human reasoning and understanding, perhaps in order to see breakthrough whether that be in finance, healing, miracles or tough times of trial. When these moments come, my prayer is that we will have the confidence to step out of the boat and into everything God has in store for us, as individuals and for our church. I believe the best is yet to come for us in the arena of faith.

Prayer - Spend some time praying for each other around the theme of faith, also giving opportunity for anyone to be prayed for who may want to seek the Gift of Faith.

Additional Reading

Hebrews 11

Genesis 22 verses 1 - 19

Matthew 11 verses 22 - 24

James 2 verses 14 - 26

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NOTES



This study booklet was produced by Elim Ryedale Publishing.

For more information contact:

Elim Ryedale Church, 62 - 64 Castlegate, Malton, YO17 9AZ

Tel: 01653 697796 Email: office@elimryedale.net Website: www.elimryedale.net


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