



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 2 - HEALING



For our second session on the Gifts of the Spirit, we are going to be looking at the gift of HEALING. Healing is one of those subjects that can often raise a host of difficult questions and feelings in people. So as we look at this, it's particularly important that we are sensitive to each other, giving people room to share their thoughts and experiences if they want to, but also understanding that this topic may bring up some difficult emotions.

That being said, the gift of healing is one that, as a Christian, I believe we would do well to be open to; to understand and have the faith to believe we will experience in our walk with Jesus.

OPENING QUESTIONS

- How would you define healing?
- Do you believe that God still heals today? Explain your answer.
- In what ways can God bring healing to a person?

READ: JAMES 5 v 14 - 15

In order to properly define what healing is, we first need to understand why there is even a need for healing. When God first created the world, everything He made was perfect - from the trees, to plants, to animals, to the sun and moon and the crowning glory of His creation - US! All was good!

God made rules, that Adam and Eve were to live by, they were to work and look after the animals and the gardens, they could eat from any of the fruit except that which came from the tree of good and evil. Everything was fine until the devil came, in the form of a serpent, and tempted them to go against God's instructions and to follow their own desires.

They ate the forbidden fruit and sin entered the world, banishing them from the garden and separating them from God - thus effecting every future generation, as we are all born into sin (Romans 5 v 12).

The result of sin is a curse that effects every part of human life, including health, offering a stark reminder of how lost we are and how we are in need of a Saviour who not only brings forgiveness from the things we do wrong, but can bring much needed healing into our lives.

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In simple terms the definition of healing for a Christian goes beyond just the physical but involves the restoration of the whole person (body, mind and spirit). This is achieved through our Saviour, Jesus, who through His life, death and resurrection defeated the power of sin and death.

We are often so focussed on the physical - illnesses like cancer or long term health issues, that it's easy to forget we also have a mental and a spiritual health that may also require healing.

Healing, just like the other Gifts of the Spirit, over the years has caused controversy amongst believers and the world as a whole. Many have tried to suggest that the gift of healing was just for biblical times; for Jesus, His disciples and the apostles of the early church but not for today. Yet, everything I see in the Bible and what I have witnessed in my own experiences point to a God who still desires to bring healing to a hurting world.

Our reading from James 5 v 14 - 15 says: ***“Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well ...”***

When it comes to healing we rightly encourage the laying on of hands and prayer ministry for those who are sick, but unfortunately ‘the church’ at times has become too focussed on this being the primary or only way for people to get healed. We have forgotten that God can and does, just as easily, use medicine, the skilled hands of a surgeon, the wisdom of a counsellor or the care of a pastor to bring about the healing required. The truth is, when healing happens it actually often includes more than one of the things mentioned.

As Isaiah reminds us about God in Isaiah 55 v 9: ***“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”***

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is the purpose of the gift of healing?
- What role do those who have the gift of healing play in seeing people healed?
- Are there any potential dangers of having the gift of healing? If so, what are they?

READ: ISAIAH 53 v 4 - 5

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When we look at the purpose behind the gift of healing, we assume the main purpose is that the person who gets prayed for gets better; and although that is the logical answer, and a very good one, it's not the only answer and (dare I say it) not the most important one! Here are three other really important purposes of the gift of healing:

- *It brings glory to God* - every time a person is set free from sickness or an illness, it shows God's divine power at work. (John 11 v 4 - Lazarus)
- *It confirms God's word to be true* - when we see people set free from sickness, it confirms the truth of the gospel; that Jesus came to forgive, save, heal and restore. (Isaiah 53 v 4 - 5)
- *To destroy the works of the enemy* - sickness is the work of the devil, he will do anything he can to blind people to the truth of God and to keep them imprisoned in their sickness. When God brings healing it destroys the strategy of the enemy and brings freedom to the captives. (1 John 3 v 8)

As believers, we are all called to pray for the sick, but there are also specific times when God may bestow the gift of healing upon a person in order to facilitate His bigger plan. For example, the evangelist Reinhard Bonnke who was called by God to spend his life winning souls for Jesus in Africa - in his many years of serving he saw many people healed which led to over a million people coming to faith in Christ.

The thing we must remember about healing is, it's not because of any special words the person praying says, nor is it any power that they have in the laying on of their hands - it's the power of God at work! We as believers are just the channels in which God's power flows.

Like any of the Gifts of the Spirit, there are dangers to the gift of healing that we should be aware of:

PRIDE - If we are seeing people healed, there is a danger that we can start to believe in our own hype and become prideful, thinking we are somehow special, believing that we are God's man or woman for the moment and that 'no one else can do it like me'. That's a slippery slope!

PERSONAL GAIN - If the gift of healing is used to make ourselves feel better, to manipulate people into giving us something - i.e. 'give me money and I'll pray for you and you will receive healing' - it will not end well. God can't be mocked, He knows the state of our hearts. (See the example of Simon the Sorcerer in Acts 8).

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GUILT - If we pray for others and we don't see a healing happen, we can feel guilty and blame ourselves which can lead to doubt and maybe cause us to give up praying for healing.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What needs to happen in order for someone to be healed?
- Do you believe that God wants to heal everyone? If so, why is it that there are some people who are healed and others who are not?
- What has been your experience of healing? Either positive or negative - how has it impacted your relationship with God or with others?

READ: MATTHEW 17 v 14 - 21

Healing is a complicated concept, there is no 'one size fits all'. Every person's situation is different and we don't know, when we are prayed for, whether we will be healed at that moment or if it's not God's time for us. However, there are certain things that we can do in order to make sure we are ready to receive our healing.

FIRSTLY, a person has to have faith - whether we are praying or receiving, we need faith! We need to believe that God can, and wants to do it for us, and as we pray together we stand united in that belief.

SECONDLY, we need to believe that God wants to heal us or use us to bring healing. It's often easy for us to believe for others but when it comes to ourselves we can't - we believe we are not good enough or worthy enough, but God says we are! We need to believe that God has our best interests at heart.

THIRDLY, we need God there. I know that it sounds pretty simplistic (and it is), but how can we hope to see healing if we don't invite Jesus 'the healer', personally into the situation we are praying for. Remember - it's not us that brings healing, it's God and God only.

One of the biggest challenges we face when it comes to healing is this - if we believe that God is loving, if we believe He has got our best interests at heart, if we know that He can and wants to heal us, why is it that some people are healed and others are not?

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I'm sure that, just like me, you know people who are struggling with ill health and are still waiting to receive their healing. Perhaps other friends or family have been faithful to God but have passed away without receiving their healing. Why does God allow this to happen? It's a question that I guarantee we have all asked at one point or another - maybe you are even asking it right now?

I have seen people get wonderfully healed - one of the members of my last church in Southampton was healed from a serious stroke over a period of months that we prayed. Equally, I have prayed for healing and I haven't seen it. In Southampton we prayed for a year for a man who had a brain tumour but sadly he died. I'll be honest - I don't understand it! But the Bible shows us:

God knows what He is doing - He is outside of time, He sees a picture that we'll probably never understand. We believe that He loves us and as much as we may struggle at times, we choose to believe He is sovereign, He is the God of the universe and He is also our friend. (Romans 8 v 28).

Healing always happens ... just not always in the way we want - more than anything else in the world, we want to see everyone we pray for healed but we also know that doesn't always happen and although that can make us sad and angry (it's OK for us to feel that way - God has broad shoulders!) we also know the Bible tells us, that in heaven, there is no pain or suffering. So, if a person doesn't receive their healing here and now, we can be confident they will receive it in heaven. (Revelation 21 v 4).

At times there can be things that stop a person being healed - although not common, in my experience there can be things that stop a person being healed. For example, a sin that is unconfessed, lack of faith or not being ready. This doesn't mean we should look for a problem round every corner but equally, under God's prompting and guiding, when appropriate, we shouldn't be scared to ask the question of ourselves or others. (Psalm 66 v 18 - 19).

We believe the gift of healing is for today. We certainly have not seen it as much as perhaps we would have liked in recent years but I believe if we show willing, if we exercise faith and are completely open to God's leading and guiding, we will see people ministering in the gift of healing.

Additional Reading

Psalm 103 verses 2 - 3

John 14 verse 12

Mark 16 verses 17 - 18

Matthew 9 verse 35

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NOTES



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