

TALK 3 - EXPLANATION

I want to spend a while reflecting on *why* we did *what* we did earlier.

During OPEN by the time that we get to the day away we find that many people have had enough **talk** about God and at some point we actually need to give people an **opportunity to actually experience God**.

We do this on the day away simply because we have more time and space to actually ask God to act.

Experiencing God through the power of the Spirit is a deeply personal thing and we all respond in different ways and we can have a number of responses, **physical, emotional and spiritual**.

- I want to just touch on these slightly. Before we asked the Spirit to come, I suggested that you shut your eyes (*so that you were not distracted by other people in the room*)

- I also suggested that you held out your hands (*as way of saying that you were open to God*).
- we then asked the Spirit to come and fill us on the basis of that passage in Luke 11 which said: *“How much more will the Holy Spirit be given to those who ask.”*
- Then some of the team came around and prayed with you as a way of adding to their own prayers to God.
- Some may have asked to lay a hand on your shoulder because that is what Jesus did often as he prayed for people.

As we saw earlier from those passages in Acts, when the Spirit comes it is often powerful and there can be a range of discernible **physical experiences** - falling, staggering, shaking, fluttering eyelids, feeling a heat or flushes which are common.

These are like **knee jerk spasms of the body** in response to the presence of the Spirit – NOT especially significant in themselves (*falling doesn't make you more spiritual*) but are **common outward manifestations of the presence of the Spirit** as he touches people deeply within.

Such reactions have been seen by us over many years as we have led these courses and throughout church history. They are normal.

We have seen everything we saw today many times on these days in NZ, in England and in other parts of the world with people of all different kinds of personalities and temperaments.

However, don't get hung up on these physical reactions OR conclude that if you did not physically respond you were not touched. They are not important. I have been in meetings where people have been knocked

to the floor and in other meetings where nothing seems to be happening on the outside.

All I would say is that when asked to come the Holy Spirit always comes whether or not you physically react and so don't get hung up if you did not react physically.

There have been many times for me when others have prayed for me to be filled with the Spirit where I did not experience anything physically BUT something very profound and powerful was going on... on the inside.

Physical reactions aside, people often respond to the Spirit with a range of feelings or emotions. Some feel peaceful and are filled with a sense of God's love.

Some people can think unless its electric and physically dramatic then it's not the real deal. BUT what if the Holy Spirits favourite manifestation is peace? So its not about trying to get zapped OR thinking that peace is nothing.

I heard someone say on a podcast recently that “Peace is the hottest commodity in the world right now. People are paying a lot of money on street corners and in pharmacies and in therapy just to get a taste of peace. and that’s available to us.”

Others feel a power or heat or a weightiness resting on them. Others feel nothing in particular. Others feel pain, others emptiness, and others feel disappointed.

Remember whatever you felt / even if it was nothing in particular / the Holy Spirit always comes but we cannot control happens when he does come.

But what if you didn't feel or experience anything?

There are a range of reasons why people don't experience anything.

1. Some people are too frightened (which is the normal reaction to the presence of Jesus) to open themselves to the Spirit (normal reaction to the presence of God – e.g. angels, 'be not afraid')
2. Others feel uncomfortable with the whole supernatural nature of Christianity and shut it off. Its ok to feel doubt but the key here is don't worry – doubt is part of the journey to faith rather than an obstacle. Jesus gave room for Thomas to doubt.
3. Others are very private people and do not want to open themselves to God.

4. Others lack a good father model and so struggle OR aren't comfortable with opening themselves to God their "father in heaven" even though he is perfect love.
5. Others feel unworthy – it happens to everyone else because they deserve it. The truth is the gift of the Spirit is received through grace. None of us deserve the gift, but through Jesus we become worthy recipients.
6. But it may not be any of those reasons and whatever the cause it is not your fault!

Hold onto the fact that when we ask the Spirit to come he comes and keep having a go!

But what if you did experience something that you did not want to experience such as pain?

If you felt pain in the presence of God today, then I would suggest that the Spirit revealed that to you and wants to heal it.

So, I would ask him for healing and comfort.

The truth is that we all carry pain inside us from our experience of life in varying degrees of intensity and such is the love of God that he wants to comfort us, to help us and heal us.

It makes sense that this may mean hurts that we have been carrying for many years tend to surface. Like I mentioned what happened to me earlier today.

If you can relate to that then take hope in the promise that God is gentle and won't force you to "go there" unless you want to. He respects you too much for that.

and at same time though... God's desire will be to continue to work on healing those parts of our lives that are broken / hurting. The Spirit only

highlights an issue to bring release and freedom. Before we create some more space to invite the Holy Spirit to come and meet with us again, I just wanted to say a little bit about a bible passage about the gifts of the spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:7-10

But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the *word of wisdom* through the Spirit, and to another the *word of knowledge* according to the same Spirit; to another *faith* by the same Spirit, and to another *gifts of healing* by the one Spirit, and to another the *effecting of miracles*, and to another *prophecy*, and to another the *distinguishing of spirits*, to another *various kinds of tongues*, and to another the *interpretation of tongues*.

Let's take one of the Spirit's gifts, speaking in tongues as an example and unpack it a bit. Tongues is the ability to speak a language you have not learnt, sometimes known to the hearer, but it is not usually a known language. A private language of prayer and worship that transcends the

language barrier often given when we run out of words to help us express the inexpressible as we consider how amazing God is.

Some of hosts may have prayed for you in this prayer language yesterday - may have been a bit weird. Normal. In the New Testament, it is a gift the disciples received when they first experienced the Spirit at Pentecost.

Bible also says that the gift of tongues does help us to know how we should pray. Not that speaking in tongues makes you a Christian or that you HAVE to speak in tongues!

It is a wonderful and helpful personal gift (*edifying and encouraging*) to have as are the others (wisdom, faith, miracles, healing, words of

knowledge etc.) It is not compulsory, but it is a supernatural gift opening us up to the supernatural dimension.

1 Corinthians 14: 4 “Anyone who speaks in a tongue edifies themselves, but the one who prophesies edifies the church.”

(Extra explanation if needed - How is it received? Well first of all God doesn't force his gifts on us but encourages us to eagerly desire them. And so if we want to speak in tongues then we need to ask the Spirit for the gift of tongues and then attempt to express the praise of God in another language. If we are to receive this gift we have to do something ourselves namely speak. God isn't suddenly going to take over your mouth and make you do things you don't want to. However, he will help you shape your words as you get going. It is a partnership between us and the Spirit – as it is with all of the other gifts of the Spirit. Some people

fear that if they start speaking in tongues they won't be able to stop or can't control it! That is not true it is a partnership with God. You control it by shutting your mouth! Such is God's humility and love that it is entirely up to you when you use the gift. If you want to try that when we have some space to open to Holy Spirit soon then why not have a go. You could ask someone who offers to pray with you if they speak in tongues and if so, would they help you have a go. What have you got to lose? I remember thinking 'What the heck is that?!' when I first heard someone else pray in tongues, but it wasn't frightening. It sounded strange and quite magical).

I also want to say a little bit about Prophecy and words of knowledge which is mentioned in that Corinthians passage. Some of you may have been prayed for by someone who prayed accurately about things they couldn't possibly know – that's the gift of prophecy (though you need to



weigh anything and if something that someone prayed yesterday does not make sense to you then just ignore it!)

Prophecy is hearing from God and speaking what you hear in order to encourage, build up or comfort someone. So when people pray accurately that is an encouragement from God to you that he is speaking to you through those praying for you and that He knows all about you.

The same goes for a Word of knowledge - which is a specific fact about a person, place or event that was not obtained through natural means.

Verse 12 it continues, “Since you are eager for gifts of the Spirit, try to excel in those that build up the church. 13 For this reason the one who speaks in a tongue should pray that they may interpret what they say. 14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. 15 So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding. 16 Otherwise when you are praising God in the Spirit, how can someone else, who is now put in the position of an inquirer, say “Amen” to your thanksgiving, since they do not know what you are saying? 17 You are giving thanks well enough, but no one else is edified. 18 I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. 19 But in the

church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.”

23 “So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and inquirers or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? 24 But if an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in while everyone is prophesying, they are convicted of sin and are brought under judgment by all, 25 as the secrets of their hearts are laid bare. So they will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, “God is really among you!”

Characteristics of a Prophetic Word:

- It will encourage you, build you up or comfort you
- It will release life and hope to you
- It may contain a factual information element
- It will not be negative or condemning.

Common ways God ‘speaks’ to us

- Impressions (thoughts/feelings)
- Internal pictures in the mind

Your imagination or projector screen of your mind – e.g. praying for someone a few months ago and both me and other person praying had same picture for this girl – of her dancing..... as we shared that she said that she had done ballet her whole life but stopped when she got to uni.

She'd been wondering about getting back into it – realised she really – missed it – grieving over it – process she's going through at moment.

As result she recently started aerial silks - she said that she struggles to hear from God – but when we shared that picture she knew that God speaks to her about her life thru others....really encouraging....really helped her relationship with God.

- **Internal, audible voice** (cuts through your own thoughts)
e.g. passage from bible or single word or voice whispering -

It is also clear from the New Testament that we don't just open ourselves to the Holy Spirit once. We need to continually open ourselves to the Spirit. Being filled with the Spirit is not a one-off experience.

Peter was filled with the Spirit three times in the space of chapters 2-4 in Acts (a period of a couple of days) (Acts 2:4 (on the day of

Pentecost), 4:8 (when he had been put in prison), 31 (when he had been released from prison).

When the Apostle Paul says in the book of Ephesians: “*Be filled with the Holy Spirit*” in Ephesians 5:18 he uses the present continuous tense urging them to go on being filled time and time again as they go on with God. We must do the same. Every day we need to be filled with the Spirit and encouraged by him.

If yesterday was the first time that you opened yourself to the Spirit I would encourage you keep having a go. You don't have to be with other people to do this. You can do this on your own!

At the beginning it is normal to go through quite a period of just receiving from God and I would suggest that over the next weeks you keep pressing in as you learn how to open yourself to God, deal with fears and concerns etc.

The key thing is to receive as much as possible when the Spirit is moving and not be rushing away but taking all of the opportunities and keep coming back for more! What I want to do now is give you all another opportunity to receive the Holy Spirit. I would really encourage all of you to give it a go although you don't have to do this if you don't want to.

There is no pressure.

What I suggest that we do is clear away the chairs. After that we will have a short time of silence in which we can say anything that we want to God. You might want to express your love for him, you might feel to say sorry for something to him that you have done wrong and ask for his forgiveness before we begin. Then we are going to sing a couple of songs. Throughout scripture and history its clear people often connect with God and his Spirit though worship. At the end of which we will ask the Holy Spirit to come and touch us all and then we will wait and see what he does! Ok let's clear the chairs away. Pray - God is here. God is with us. God is in us. We relax and surrender into your presence. We let go of striving and let go to the One who is already there.

- Silence 1 minute
- Worship
- Pray –close eyes, Open Hands - Wait – invite Holy Spirit to come and fill us.
- Pray for others: we often we find that having someone encourage you in this really helps so, in a moment some of the leaders would

love to stand with you and quietly just bless what God may be doing. They will lay a hand on your shoulder and quietly ask if they could pray for you? You can simply say “No I’m ok” if you’d like? They do this simply as a way of adding to your own prayers to God and because that is what Jesus did when he prayed for people. They may or not pray something out loud. I’d encourage you to receive prayer if you can.

