

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT SEMINARS

SESSION 4 NOTES: "RECEIVING GOD'S GIFT"

If anyone thirsts, let him come to me, and let him who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.' (John 7:37-38)

Introduction

Over the last three sessions we have looked at how God loves us; He freed us from darkness and the power of Satan through Jesus Christ; He wants to give us a new life through the Holy Spirit. God is offering us a relationship in which we can have new life. He will give us the gift of new life in the Spirit; he will change and heal us, make us new; he will join us to a Christian community or to other brothers and sisters who will help us grow in this new life. He invites us to turn to him to allow him to do what he is offering to do.

In order to receive the new life God is offering us, we must turn away from those things which block our relationship with God and accept Jesus as our Lord.

We need a change of direction, a reorientation of our lives:

- Away from those things which block our relationship with God and give Satan a hold on us, and towards God and obedience. Only when we follow him can he lead us to a new life.
- God does not want the obedience of slaves, who obey out of fear of punishment, or the obedience of employees, who obey because they are rewarded; he wants the obedience of sons who obey out of love and respect for their father. We must accept Jesus as our Lord.

The word "repentance" refers to this change of direction. Repentance involves:

- Honesty - the admission that there are things in our lives that are wrong and need changing
- Humility - the willingness to change; the awareness that we need God's help
- Renunciation - turning away from wrongdoing; deciding not to do it again
- Asking forgiveness for what we have done wrong
- We must specifically turn away from non-Christian religions, spiritualism, witchcraft, occultism, sexual intercourse outside of marriage, adultery, homosexual acts, murder, robbery, shoplifting, cheating (business deals, on exams), lying, slander, drunkenness (not drinking), dependence on drugs.
- Those who have committed serious sins need sacramental confession in order to complete their process of reconciliation. Sacramental confession can also be very helpful for those who have not committed serious sins, but who are turning to the Lord in a new way.

In order to receive the new life God is offering to us, we must ask him for it in faith, expecting to receive it because he wants us to have it and he promised he would give it to us.

- Faith means relying on what God has said (Matthew 14:22-33). We know that everything God says is true, because he knows everything and does not lie. Our Christian lives are based on facts; we put faith in the facts, our feelings follow. We deal with feelings of doubt by looking at the facts. When we see the fact that God promised us something, we can expect that it will happen to us. We need more than doctrinal belief alone; we need to claim the promises of God.
- We can expect God to baptize us in the Spirit because he told us that he wants it for us (Luke 11:9-13), because he loves us and wants us to be united with him. We can have it because of what Jesus did for us, not because we can earn it or deserve it.
- Obstacles to receiving God's gifts include: A feeling of unworthiness; The fear of making a fool of oneself; The fear of having our personalities taken over; Doubt, temptation by Satan to not believe or to reject God's gifts; Pride—the feeling that we don't need God's gifts; The fear of what others think.

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DAILY SCRIPTURE & REFLECTION WEEK FOUR: "RECEIVING GOD'S GIFT"

Day 1

"When Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied" Acts 19:7

Paul, after explaining, prays for them to be filled with the promised Holy Spirit by the laying on of his hands and sure enough they all receive the gift and begin to speak in tongues (languages they don't ordinarily know) and prophecy (that is they speak about the things that are on the heart of God).

Day 2

"Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, the one who seeks finds and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened." Matthew 7:7-8

Jesus again reassuring us that we need only actively desire and reach out for the things of God to receive them and that this promise is for everyone, including you! First for forgiveness, which prepares the ground to receive the other outpourings of His Spirit that follow it.

Day 3

"Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Christ Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" Acts 2:38

Note Peter's words: he doesn't say be baptized and you **may** receive the gift of the Holy Spirit but **"You will."** Usually, it is only our lack of knowledge that we **could** receive this gift, that has prevented us from receiving it already. Remember, God won't force any gift on us; but, once we know, we then just need to ask for it. Sometimes there seems to be a delay in our receiving - don't worry, but trust in this word of scripture and keep asking for the gift.

Day 4

"All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them" Acts 2:4

The coming of the Spirit was manifested in an extraordinary way for the apostles so they wouldn't miss it: the sound of a mighty rushing wind that filled the house, something like flames of fire resting on each of them and then the gift of tongues where they were all able to speak in foreign tongues that they didn't know. This last is a gift which is still regularly given when we receive the Holy Spirit but, like all the gifts of God, we have to be open to receive it. Keep asking if you haven't had it yet.

Day 5

"I am going to send you what My Father has promised; but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" John 24:49

Jesus' words to the apostles make it clear that He knew the job ahead of them now was too difficult without the clothing of the Holy Spirit (that the Father had promised in Ezekiel and many other places). It still is!

Day 6

"Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it" Luke 18:17

God is not looking for our spiritual maturity as much as a simple and open heart. A knowledge that we need help, as a child knows it; and like a child, our willingness to receive it. Not our ability, but our availability! Are we open and available to the Holy Spirit to work through us to bring in His Kingdom?

Day 7

"Wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about" Acts 1:4

The Apostles, Disciples and Mary waited in the upper room for the promised Holy Spirit: you are now waiting in much the same way. Wait on Him as they did, with full expectation and thanksgiving.