

**f12** EQUIP  
RESTORE  
ADVANCE

# SUPERNATURAL

10 DAY FAST & PRAY DEVOTIONAL

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# PREFACE

As we commence this 10-day period of prayer and fasting, we do so with expectancy that we will see God work supernaturally in our lives, church, and nations. We believe that there will be foundations laid for the year ahead resulting in many salvations, healings, deliverances, provision and breakthrough.

In Matthew 6:16, Jesus said, "***when** you fast*" not "***if** you fast*". In fact, he also said in Matthew 17:21, "*This kind does not go out except by prayer **and fasting**.*"

Many can testify to experiencing breakthrough as we fast alongside prayer, disconnecting ourselves from the world, and reconnecting to God. Together they become a spiritual combination punch.

For 10 days we're encouraging as many in the church who can, to participate in a special time of prayer and fasting.

Daniel and his three young friends fasted on numerous occasions. They faced a culture and society that didn't know their God, and they likewise desperately needed a breakthrough in their situation.

They chose a special fast, only eating fruit and vegetables and at the end, God both honoured and set his favour upon them.

But there are other types of fast.

***Social media*** – disconnect from the clamouring and often divisive voices on social media to spend time in prayer, worship, and the Scriptures.

***Television*** – given that the average person in the UK watches four hours of television daily, just imagine the spiritual nutrition one could receive by fasting from TV and connecting with the Lord.

***Daytime food fast*** – throughout the day you may choose to fast from food, devoting preparation and mealtimes to God, and breaking the fast each evening.

***Total food fast*** – others may wish to fast from food altogether for the entire ten days and only have liquids.

If you have any health conditions or feel you may require medical advice regarding any type of food fast, please consult with your doctor in advance before commencing the fast.

A video version of the written daily devotions will also be available on the Living Hope YouTube channel from 7am daily and on demand thereafter.

**[www.youtube.com/lhtvchannel](http://www.youtube.com/lhtvchannel)**

Let's start 2023 as a church family with our heart's desire to seek first his Kingdom and commencing Wednesday January 4<sup>th</sup> why not join with us as a participator in what will become a season of refreshing, renewal, and revival.

In His Service,

Jonathan Stanfield.

Lead Elder

# PRAYER & FASTING

*"So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."*

MARK 9:29 NKJV

"After I had been on a ventilator (due to covid) for about three weeks, it wasn't looking good. My church called an emergency prayer meeting on Tuesday night December 7<sup>th</sup> 2021. It was a real Luke 18:1 'always pray and never give up' moment. The next day they took me off the ventilator expecting I would not make it. But God would have other plans. Miraculously, I started breathing on my own again and started to get better. I am convinced that I would not be alive today if it were not for the Lord answering the fervent prayers of the saints."

Those are the words of Mike Fanning. He's an elder (pastor) at our partner church, Heritage, in San Clemente, southern California.

Today, Mike has fully recovered and is serving back on staff fulltime within the church.

Why do we pray and fast?

## 1. Prayer Connects Us to God

*"Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed." Mark 1:35 NKJV*

Since this was the daily practise of the Son of God, how much more do we need to imitate his example in our day? Prayer connects us to God and the more time we spend with the Father, and meditate upon the Scriptures, the more we get to know Him.

Something happens when you spend time with another person. You get to know them, their strengths, and weaknesses. Often you get surprises. As I have gotten to know folks more personally, I have often said to them, "I didn't know you could do that!" The same is true with God!

*"But the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits." Daniel 11:32b*

When I'm depending on me to deal with situations and problems, I can be dismayed, filled with hopelessness and disappointed but the more time I spend in God's presence, becoming intimate with him, my faith rises.

The context and circumstances for Daniel were wild. He had been taken into captivity as a young man from Jerusalem to Babylon, modern day Iraq. Daily, the authorities were trying to indoctrinate him with the values and culture of a pagan nation. He was never going to turn his back on his God even when the laws of the land dictated otherwise. When thrown into the lion's den he stands firm. Why? He knows his God! How? As a little boy in Sunday school, I used to sing the old chorus – "Daniel was a man of prayer. Daily he prayed three times!" He was a man of prayer. He knew his God!

His life was shaped by prayer. He knew his God, and he knew his God was able!  
Prayer connects us to God!

## 2. Fasting Disconnects Us From The World

*"In weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" 2 Cor 11:27 NKJV*

Paul, an apostle, leading the way for the first followers of Jesus testified to fasting often. If you think the world looks like heaven today then don't worry about fasting, but if like Paul you're seeing Kingdoms colliding and the enemy continually resisting the Kingdom then follow his example. Fasting gets the world out of us!

Why is our personal holiness key for God to work in and through us?

*"If you keep yourself pure, you will be a special utensil for honourable use. Your life will be clean, and you will be ready for the Master to use you for every good work." 2 Timothy 2:21 (NLT)*

God is Holy. Your and my breakthrough is going to come through a work of the Holy Spirit. He's looking for holy vessels.

Think of it this way. The greater the sin in our lives, the greater the resistance within us for God to move through us.

Every human being is made up of **spirit, soul and body**.

Our bodies are how we connect to ourselves.

Our souls (emotions) connect us to other people.

Our spirits connect us to God.

Whatever is the strongest of the three will dominate the other two.

If your body is disproportionately out of shape, is dictating terms and conditions, then it will affect both your emotions and spiritual walk.

If your soul, your emotions, are mastering you then your moods, stress or depression will dictate your relationship with God and the life in your body.

If your spirit is firing on all cylinders, then it will rule your emotions and your body.

When we fast, we're not only taking control of those things which might have a negative hold on us but we're also feeding that part of our make-up that is the spirit.

*"So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. **But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.**" Romans 8:6 (NLT)*

Whatever you give the most attention will dominate the other two.

We need our spirit daily to dominate the other two! Pray and Fast.

*As you pray today, ask that you will discover the very heart of the Father as you connect with God through prayer.*

*As you fast, ask him how to disconnect from the world more deeply.*

# DELIVERANCE

*"we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places"*

EPHESIANS 6:12

Until about 12 years ago, I never really believed or had experience in the demonic oppression of Christians. I just didn't understand the area of deliverance until I asked Mike Davies to explain it to me. He unpacked a great teach about deliverance but it wasn't until the four12 conference that week that my world was blown apart. I was speaking to someone and they mentioned fear, so I simply spoke to the spirit of fear and told it to leave! In that moment I witnessed my first deliverance. The theory become reality before my eyes as the demon manifested in the person and we were able to cast it out. That person is still in freedom today from that spiritual oppression. Praise God.

Deliverance definitely exists in the realm of the supernatural. The apostle Paul, writing to the Ephesians explains, *"we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places"* (Ephesians 6:12). Since the fall of Satan, the powers of darkness have been evident, but Jesus came to set us free, and to extend the Kingdom of God here on earth as it is in Heaven. The act of deliverance is a supernatural power encounter when the oppressed person is set free from demonic influence and oppression over their life.

As a young teenager, I lived for three months in the Jura mountains, in Switzerland. During this hot summer, great thunderstorms would happen in the evening as the hot front from the valley would meet the cold front from the mountains resulting in fierce storms with flashing lightning and rolling thunder shaking the whole building. This is what it's like when the Kingdom of God comes against the powers of darkness. In a deliverance, there can be only one outcome because of the cross.

We see this clash of kingdoms at its greatest when Jesus begins his ministry. In his home town, he is rejected as the Messiah and must leave and go to Capernaum. There, the spiritual thermostat is turned right up and there is an atmosphere for the supernatural which was not seen in Nazareth. The lame are made to walk, the blind are made to see, and demons are cast out.

It's useful to look at one example of how and where Jesus cast out a demon. We find the story recorded in Mark 1:21-28. Here, we read that this demon was cast out in a place of worship - the synagogue!

Before we see how a person is delivered, let's look at how Christians can be oppressed by a demon. It is all about open doors. Demons can't break their way in to oppress us but they can use open doors to gain access. Doors could be obvious entrances like watching porn, alcohol abuse, drug use or having an affair where we see the spirit of lust and compulsion.

But there can also be back entrances like a cancer-scare, a car accident or anything that made us fearful or anxious. The enemy is a liar and a fraud so will piggyback on our own emotions to give us a spirit of fear or depression.

To understand what being oppressed by a demon is like, imagine that you are in a tent in the middle of a great safari park in Africa and suddenly during the night a pride of lions comes through the camp. A lion approaches your tent, and you can see him lick the condensation off the side of your tent! All that is between you and the lion is a thin piece of material. No, the lion is not in the tent but imagine how you feel. You are fearful and oppressed. It seems that at any moment you'll be torn to pieces. That is what it's like to be oppressed by the enemy in an area of our Christian life and that will certainly hold us back in our Christian walk.

In the synagogue in Mark 1, we see that, because of the spiritual atmosphere and the presence of Jesus, the demon manifests and shouts out. We have seen that many times in our church services and church meetings, when the spiritual atmosphere is raised, the enemy often manifests. But notice how Jesus dealt with it. He just spoke to the demon and expelled it.

Today, we follow the example of Jesus in creating an atmosphere where a power encounter with the Holy Spirit can set captives free. In a deliverance, we simply identify the demon, speak to that demon, and expel that demon in the name of Jesus. Sometimes there may be some drama, like in this story, but other times there is just a leaving of a demon and a freedom through Christ.

In Mark 1:39, there is a summary of Jesus' ministry, *"He went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons."* Deliverance was a normal occurrence in the life and ministry of Jesus and so it should be for the church today because today we still have people who are oppressed, demonised, and influenced by the enemy.

If you can identify anywhere in your life that you feel oppression or you feel you can't break free from patterns of sinful behaviour then we'd love you to experience deliverance and freedom in Christ. Just speak to your local pastor about arranging a time for some prayer ministry.

# THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, **for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes**, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."*

ROMANS 1:16

I met Steve a few years ago. He was a friend of a close friend of mine. I think he was a bit nervous when we first met as I don't think he knew many pastors. Steve recently started attending Douglas PM (I think it was Maddie's waffles that attracted him to church). He was relaxed and felt welcomed. After a few weeks, I had the opportunity to take Steve out for a meal during which he started a conversation about faith and we discussed the gospel; the good news about Jesus. Over dinner I asked Steve, "is there any reason that's preventing you from giving your life to Jesus right now?" In that moment, I saw tears well-up in his eyes as he replied, "No." So we paused our meal and at that table, Steve gave his life to Jesus. This was a supernatural encounter that changed the course and destiny of Steve's life. In that moment, the power of the gospel set Steve free and brought salvation into his life.

*God's word tells us, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, **for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes**, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."*

*Romans 1:16*

The amazing thing is that we are spiritual beings, designed and purposed to worship our Creator and heavenly Father. But as sin entered the world through Adam, our sin separated us from God. The bible states that we are born with sin (Psalm 51:5). We are therefore spiritually dead and in need of rebirth. Steve knew that he couldn't fix himself and needed to invite Jesus into his life.

Jesus stated, "you must be born again" to a seeker called Nicodemus; a very religious man yet, like us, in need of this rebirth. Jesus taught us that this rebirth is not something that we can engineer ourselves by good works or religious fervour. The truth is that this rebirth is a totally supernatural event; a transformation only made possible by the death and resurrection of our saviour, Jesus Christ.

In our evangelism outreach, we often meet people who do believe in heaven and hope that they will one day get there, but when asked why they think they are going to heaven they often talk about living a good life, or being good to people, or even attending church. Billy Graham said that, "Many people have just enough natural religion to make them immune to the real thing."

Salvation results in this power encounter with a holy God who can forgive all of our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Anything else a fraud. It has to be supernatural. (1 John 1:9)

In Luke 19:1-10, Luke records the story of a power encounter that led to a supernatural life-changing moment for a man named Zacchaeus in a city called Jericho. Luke's account gives us lots of details about this man: his name, his height, and his bank account statement but it's his occupation that makes this story so amazing. Zacchaeus was the chief tax collector in that region.

To put that in perspective, the Jews had a list of people to avoid because of their sinfulness. Prostitutes, sinners and then, top of the list (or bottom of the pile) there were tax collectors. That was because tax collectors worked for the Romans and collected the taxes to go to Caesar, and once Caesar's quota was reached, the tax collector could then charge his own rates to line his pockets. Tax collectors were hated and Zacchaeus was the CHIEF TAX COLLECTOR.

This encounter shows us that God's supernatural grace and mercy extends to all, even the folk we may say could never (or should never) be saved. But the gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). There was no way that Zacchaeus could save himself. He needed a supernatural encounter with Jesus.

This encounter shows us that God's supernatural grace and mercy is seeking you! Jesus came to seek and to save lost folk like you and me and supernaturally gives us new birth, changing our direction and destiny. Jesus approached Zacchaeus. He knew his name and the condition of his heart and said he was there to meet him.

This encounter also shows us that God's supernatural grace and mercy changes hearts. Zacchaeus, the moment he was transformed by the gospel, made amends, *"Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold."* That is the fruit of a transformed life.

I finish with the same question I asked Steve over dinner, "is there any reason preventing you from giving your life to Jesus right now?" If the answer is "no", then please contact us and we would love to share with you the gospel, *for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes*. And if the answer is "yes", then we would love to talk with you further and share the gospel with you.

Contact us on email address below and let me know your answer.

info@livinghope.im

# HEARING FROM GOD

*Speak, for your servant is listening.*

1 SAMUEL 3:10

It was just a normal drive home from the airport. My friend had been travelling a long time so getting him home to chill-out after travelling, fill his hungry belly and rest-up was the priority of the day. As we travelled, laughed and arrived a few moments from home, I suddenly had a sense the Lord was talking to me in the car. "You need to go to this lady's home now." My mind immediately began fighting off the voice. My friend is hungry, tired and I need to show him good hospitality and care; I couldn't just land it on him to take a random detour. But a few moments later and the same voice came again, "You need to go to this lady's home now." It kept echoing around my mind and before I knew it, I said "I can't ignore this" to my friend and we were on our way to this lady's home.

Wondering what might happen next, making no phone contact and not knowing if she was home, I knocked on the door pondering why God had led me here. The door creaked open and I was greeted by a saddened figure. The truth of the matter was this lady had just arrived home ten minutes before from the hospital where her husband had sadly passed away that day. In that moment we had the privilege of praying with her and allowing God to minister to her in her grief at one of the hardest times of her life. If I had never heard and responded to God, we would have never had this timely opportunity and instead simply filled our bellies unaware of what God's plan was for us in that moment.

I believe God speaks often to his children and it's so important for us to open our ears, clear the noises that distract and be positioned to hear his voice at any moment of the day. In 1 Samuel 3, the Lord calls Samuel three times in the night before, on the fourth call, he recognises God is speaking to him under Elis's guidance and they begin a conversation. "Speak, for your servant is listening" becomes his heart's cry as God supernaturally reveals news of what is to come. We are all made totally differently so may I encourage you today to position yourself in places where you will be able to hear God more clearly. If you need silence, find it. If you need a crowd and a coffee shop, make space to go there; nature and the hills, don't skip it. With so much noise, news and information filling our minds, ensure that you have positioned yourself to have time and space daily to go before the Heavenly Father and listen. And when he is talking to you in the rhythms of your daily life, learn to position your mind to listen rather than shut it out when it's

interrupting your schedule. It is in these key moments that God has a supernatural plan for you! God's direction is a powerful weapon for life!

When I think of Jesus, I see someone who is positioned perfectly to hear from the Father. He was in perfect unity, continuously seeking his face and wanting to bring glory to the Father. Jesus says, "I do exactly as the father commands me." Time after time, we see Jesus positioned in a place where he is following the Father's voice and acting upon that which the Father has spoken. In these moments, we see healing, deliverance, salvation, new hope and new life. We know that if we believe in Jesus, we will do the same works and even greater things than him so I want to encourage you today to position yourself to hear from God and, like Jesus did, do the things we are being commanded to do. God is continuously longing to reach our broken world and his precious children. Often, if we act upon that which we are sensing God speaking to us about, it brings a powerful touch of the Kingdom of God.

If you're wondering what a life hearing from God and seeing the miraculous interact with our normal lives looks like, have a read of the book of Acts and see powerful examples of God transforming lives as his followers hear and obey his voice. God's voice can be heard and followed by all and I firmly believe that whatever your day-to-day life looks like - at the office or home, street or park - we have the divine potential to hear from God and position ourselves to act upon the directions of our heavenly father!

I pray that you will have the desire to make space to hear his voice in your life today. I pray that you will act boldly on where his voice is leading you and if for a while you have felt nudged by the Father in certain areas, that you are able to find the courage and faith to step-out into areas of discomfort trusting his Kingdom will break in miraculously around you!

#### Prayer Points

1. Pray that you can live positioned to hear from God.
2. Pray that you will have faith and boldness to act upon all that God is saying to you
3. Pray for thousands of powerful, supernatural opportunities as we step-out hearing from God's voice.

# EXTRAORDINARY LIVES

Rick Hoyt completed over 1,120 endurance events, including 72 Marathons and six Ironman Triathlons. He completed the Boston Marathon 32 times. He also biked and ran across the USA in 1992 completing 6,011km in 45 days and regularly competed in Triathlons.

This is made all the more remarkable because Rick had Cerebral Palsy and was paralysed from the neck down so unable to take a single step. His achievements were all as a result of an incredible partnership with his father, Dick. For swimming, Dick swam with a rope towing a specially designed dinghy. When it came to cycling, a specialised tandem bike allowed Dick to cycle with his son and he ran pushing Rick in his wheelchair.

Dick said, *"I have a beautiful son and an activity we can do together, despite his disability. It's been an incredible journey. I'm not a hero. I'm just a father."*<sup>1</sup>

The Book of Acts deliberately shows us ordinary men and women doing extraordinary things. Peter heals a man paralysed for over 40 years; he raises Dorcas from the dead; he miraculously escapes from prison and heals people simply by his shadow passing over them. Paul raises Eutychus from the dead; experiences prison chains falling off; is unharmed by venomous snakes and heals with his sweaty handkerchiefs. Not to mention others, including Philip vanishing and reappearing hundreds of miles away!

These exploits truly were extraordinary and supernatural. So much so that even magicians, like Simon Magus wanted to buy their gift. That said, the characters themselves wanted to turn the spotlight away from themselves. When the Roman centurion, Cornelius, tried to bow down and worship Peter, *"Peter lifted him up, saying, 'Stand up; I myself am also a man.'" (Acts 10:26)* In Lystra, after Paul healed a man lame from birth, the people started calling them gods; *"But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: 'Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you'" (Acts 14:15a).*

The Bible goes out of its way to make us understand that supernatural feats and miracles have nothing to do with who we are and everything to do with our relationship with an amazing God who wants to reveal Himself through ordinary men and women.

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<sup>1</sup> Dick Hoyt, Devoted: The Story of a Father's Love for His Son

Each of us should never allow the supernatural in church life to become a spectator sport where we watch and admire wonderful ministry gifts. No, our place is to deepen our relationship with an extraordinary God who wants us to know Him as Father. Just like Dick Hoyt did with his son, our Father is choosing to do great things with and through us.

So, how can we make ourselves more available for the supernatural through us?

### **Intimacy with God**

Peter and Paul were just like us but they knew exactly who they were praying to and in whom they were trusting. The power of the supernatural was first released through their intimate relationship with Jesus. There were years of waiting and deepening that relationship. Perhaps we should start here and prioritise intimacy with our heavenly Father; *"the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits."* Daniel 11:32b (NKJV)

### **Prayer**

We must never underestimate the power of prayer. James tells us that the prayers of ordinary saints can be just as effective as men like the great prophet Elijah who opened and closed the heavens for rain. *"Elijah was a man with a nature like ours [with the same physical, mental, and spiritual limitations and shortcomings], and he prayed intensely for it not to rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months."* James 5:17 (AMP)

### **Expectancy**

We are ordinary but our God is not! *"Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think."* (Ephesians 3:20 NLT) We cannot predict or presume on what God will do as His ways are not our ways. Our responsibility is to be willing to ask as ordinary men and women and trust in Him, taking every opportunity. Miracles do happen! Earlier this year, my wife Carole fell whilst running and an x-ray confirmed she had broken her arm. She was given an appointment for the Fracture Clinic the following week. On the Sunday before her appointment, she arrived for our ONE service. On the Welcome Team were two ordinary men (sorry Brett and Jamie!). They were ready! Taking every opportunity, they asked if they could pray and Carole trusted. The following day, she attended her appointment and further x-rays were taken. This time there was a difference. No fracture! She was healed, not by men but through ordinary men trusting in an extraordinary God.

# DISCERNING OF SPIRITS

*But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.*

HEBREWS 5:14 (ESV)

The Holy Spirit gives the gift of discernment to enable certain Christians to clearly recognise and distinguish between the influence of God, Satan, the world and the flesh in a given situation. The church needs those with this gift to warn believers in times of danger or keep them from being led astray by false teaching.

Let me give you an example. Paul exercised this gift when he cast out the spirit of divination in Acts 16:16-18. Paul is with Silas in Philippi when a slave girl starts following them over a course of several days crying out: *"These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation."* Now, what she was saying was actually true, and to the crowds it may have seemed helpful, informative and even wise. However, that truth originated from a place of evil and was designed to distract, derail, frustrate and cause fatigue in Paul and Silas.

It is clear from this account in scripture that Paul discerned the true nature of the spirit at work in the slave girl. As such he was able to rebuke the demonic spirit and cast it out of the slave girl.

Allow me to give you three primary areas concerning the gift of spiritual discernment.

## **1.) The Holy Spirit.**

The gift of the discerning of spirits is primarily used to discern the presence and work of Holy Spirit. The reason Holy Spirit gives us this gift is so that we are able to co-labour with Him. Often, it takes time and space to hear Him and know what He is saying to us. He wants us to learn how to move from a position of doing what we think is best, to co-labouring with Him.

A practical example of this in Living Hope can be seen during our Sunday services where the elders and the service leader in particular aim to discern the leading and the work of Holy Spirit as we move through the service together.

## 2.) The Human Spirit.

This supernatural gift helps us to discern the true character or motive behind a person's words or actions. This gift can flow even if an individual is trying to hide their motives from casual view.

A good example is seen in Acts 8:17-24 when Peter discerns the condition of Simon the sorcerer's heart. The posture of Simon's heart was bent towards selfish gain and power rather than kingdom service and humility.

Sometimes, what may seem like a really good idea or course of action to us, may not be the will of God at all, and the gift of discernment can help identify if the leading is truly from God or merely from the good intent of the flesh.

## 3.) Demonic Spirits.

At times, feelings of oppression, suicide, pressure, fear, lust, and even sexual desires can originate beyond natural causes. The sense of an oppressive or heavy atmosphere, confusion or a pervading sense of sadness or loneliness for no logical or apparent reason may also be indicative of influence beyond the norm.

The spiritual gift of discernment is then invaluable to expose and bring into the light the demonic cause and influence resulting in the above. And as with the example of Paul and Silas in Philippi (Acts 16), once we know the origin, we can work with Holy Spirit and in His power to bring healing and freedom.

I finish with this admonition from the book of Romans.

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

*Romans 12:2 (ESV).*

Holy Spirit gives this incredible gift. A gift of supernaturally discerning right from wrong and good from evil. Even so, as Paul says to the Roman church, we must co-labour with Holy Spirit to grow in this wonderful gift.

If you walk in this gift, thank the Lord with a grateful heart. It is much needed in the Kingdom today. And ask the Lord for ongoing opportunities and encounters where you can practice and grow in spiritual discernment!

# FAITH

*To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit*

1 CORINTHIANS 12:7-9A

The spiritual gift of faith may be defined as the special gift whereby the Spirit provides certain followers of Jesus with extraordinary confidence in God's promises, power, and presence so they can take heroic stands for the future of God's work in the church.

As with all spiritual gifts, the gift of faith is given to edify others in the body of Christ. Those with the gift of faith are an inspiration to their fellow believers, exhibiting a simple confidence in God that shows in all they say and do.

A beautiful example of this gift can be seen in one of my friends, a man called Jamie Sutherland. Jamie forms part of our evening congregation in the South of the island. For years, I was under the impression that Jamie walks in the gift of healing, and to a degree he does. I have witnessed many people enjoying either a measure, or full healing when Jamie prays for them. But in recent years, I have become ever-more convinced that Jamie's primary spiritual gift is not healing, but the gift of faith. Jamie simply acts in accordance with supernatural faith to see breakthrough in people's lives. Jamie has an unwavering confidence in the promises of God complimented by a rock-solid faith in the character of God! And as a result, he sees many healings because he often steps out in great faith in this area.

But the gift of faith touches every area of a believer's life, not just their physical wellbeing. Take Noah of old as an example. He spent 120 years building a colossal boat in a world that had never seen rain because of great faith in his God. What about Abraham, who had faith to father a child when his wife's natural ability to bear children had ended decades before?

If you are excited by the idea of supernatural faith, spend time reading and meditating on the examples of people with the gift of faith who are those listed in

Hebrews chapter 11. These are men and woman who all exhibited the spiritual gift of faith manifesting in a strong and unshakeable confidence in God, His Word, and His promises.

Those with the gift of faith are an inspiration to their fellow believers, exhibiting a simple confidence in God that shows in all they say and do.

Extraordinarily faithful people show a humble godliness and reliance on God's promises, often so much so that they are known to be quietly fearless and zealous. You will regularly find them proclaiming either quietly to themselves, or for the world to hear, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against His church!"

They are so convinced that all obstacles to the gospel and to God's purposes will be overcome and so confident that God will secure the advancement of His cause, that they will often do far more in the promotion of His kingdom than many talented and erudite preachers and teachers in our modern age.

God gives all Christians saving faith. After all, Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast"

However, the spiritual gift of faith is given to some who exhibit extraordinary amounts of faith in their Christian walk and who, by their faith, are a joy and an encouragement to others.

Could this be you?

Why not ask Holy Spirit even today to bless you and the church at large by entrusting you with the supernatural gift of faith?!

Amen.

# HEALING

One of my most memorable conversations on the Isle of Man took place in the bone fracture clinic at Noble's Hospital in 2017. I was visiting with my son Conor to address a fractured humerus and dislocated shoulder that Conor had earned during a friendly game of Church football. Conor had suffered a nasty break and dislocation just a week before this conversation occurred. Amazingly, seven days after the injury, Conor was prayed for in Church and healed instantly. He couldn't wait to tell the Doctor what had happened. As the Doctor stared at the x-ray of the injury and assessed the damaged limb he shook his head, smiled and said, "I can't explain this." Conor of course took time to explain what had happened to which the Doctor simply said, "Conor, please don't tell too many people about your Holy Spirit or I'll be out of a job!"

We really appreciated the care given by the hospital and the lovely staff, and there are times when we are most thankful for our excellent medical care on the island but isn't it wonderful to have testimonies of the power of God restoring and repairing our broken bodies?

We live in a very cerebral world. We have been raised to believe what we see with our eyes and know with our well-informed scientific mindsets. As followers of Jesus, there is a whole realm of power that is evidenced daily but cannot be explained by scientific theories. That realm is the Kingdom of God and it operates under a whole host of different laws to the natural laws of earth. The Kingdom of God cannot always be explained in words because as the apostle Paul said, "it isn't a matter of talk, but a demonstration of Spirit and of power".

As followers of Jesus, it is so important that we recognise the power that resides within us. Not power that comes from our human nature, but power that is present because the Holy Spirit lives in us and enables us to do what He wants to do. In fact, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead dwells in us! We are carriers of resurrection power. In Jesus' name, broken bones can be fixed, and dislocations can be relocated.

I love the way Jesus described this to His disciples, He said:

*And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well*

*Mark 16:17-20*

Personally, I wouldn't recommend drinking deadly poisons, and I'm certainly not an advocate of any interaction with snakes at all, but casting out the demonic, laying hands on the sick, that is not reserved for a small number of uniquely gifted people. Jesus said that healing and bondage-breaking is in the spiritual DNA of everyone who believes in and follows Jesus!

Perhaps what restrains us is a lack of confidence to exercise the power we have in the name of Jesus. Perhaps, at times, we turn to paracetamol when there was an opportunity to turn to Jesus.

James the half-brother of Jesus said:

*"the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up"*

*James 5:15*

Of course, the faith that James is describing isn't an intense human condition of belief that we muster from our own knowledge. This faith is a God-given conviction; God Himself persuades us that He can do what needs to be done.

Let me give you an example.

Recently, I was in a restaurant with a friend when I overheard one of the staff members complain of dreadful arthritic pain in their hands. The person said she had wakened up for the last 12 years every morning with her hands tightly clenched into fists unable to release the spasm. As I listened, initially I felt compassion. That was the human response, but compassion doesn't fix anything. Then I felt an uncomfortable urge to pray for this lovely lady. The urge was not from me. My flesh

was rebelling, "Stay in your seat. It's not your problem. It's been 12 years; nothing can be done". But God was moving in me, "Get up and offer to pray". Immediately I was filled with excitement and belief that she could be healed.

That is the faith that James was speaking about.

So, I stood up and asked what had been done to help the problem. Medication, doctors etc etc - all the things we should do when we are sick, but what happens when even our powerful medicines don't solve the problem? What then? Well, we have Jesus. We will place our hands on the sick and they will be made well. I took the lady's hands and prayed. The next morning, I asked how she was. Her reply, "I woke up for the first time in 12 years with no pain".

Over the course of my life, I have prayed for many people to be healed. I have seen many healings, some quite astonishing. But I have also prayed for numbers of people that to my knowledge were not healed. Why is that? Why doesn't God heal everyone?

Certainly, His 12 apostles had occasions when Christians were left unhealed despite the immense APOSTOLIC POWER of Jesus' closest friends. Paul advised Timothy to use a little wine for his frequent illnesses. Why did Paul not just heal Timothy? Why did God refuse to heal Paul from his ailment in 2 Corinthians 12?

The question we should ask is not, "Why did God not heal such and such a person?" We must ask Him, "Father, what do you want to do in a given situation?" When we pray in accordance with His will, we will see the sick made well. We will see the demonised released from bondage. God is the healer. He is well able. Sometimes He demonstrates His immense power through healing. Sometimes He demonstrates His immense power through the grace He gives a person during a long season of suffering. God can demonstrate His glory in weakness and in health. What I do know however, is that when He gives me faith to pray for the sick, more often than not, I see the sick made well. I also know this: when I don't pray for the sick to be healed, I see no healings!

God's Kingdom is at work on the earth now, just as it was when Jesus was raised from death to LIFE. Our job is to ask. His job is to move.

**PRAYER ACTIVATION:**

Why not ask the Lord today to show you somebody who needs to be touched by His healing power? Don't assume you know who He will put on your heart, but ask for faith and be willing to respond.

This week, step out; pray for somebody who needs prayer. You may just see a wonderful miracle that will bless you and somebody else.

# GENEROSITY

*Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether*

PSALM 139:4

If there is one scripture in God's word that beautifully describes His supernatural qualities, it must be Psalm 139. David begins the intensely personal psalm praising God for His OMNISCIENCE (He know everything) and His OMNIPRESENCE (He is always PRESENT at ALL TIMES). David reminds us that WHEREVER WE GO, WHENEVER WE GO, God is always present.

I particularly love David's statement in verse four, "even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord you know it altogether". It would certainly confirm the supernatural nature of God if He could know our fleeting thoughts or indeed answer prayer before it has been articulated on our tongues.

I have experienced this many times in my life, and particularly in the area of God's provision to enable me to live generously. As a family, one of the things the MacRazies love is a full table. We enjoy having people in our home and we particularly love to feed people – well! My wife is a feeder. She loves to love people with amazing food.

One Christmas day, we were particularly looking forward to a busy dinner table. We had some great friends coming to us for lunch, what a joy it was. In the run up to the meal, I asked Kaz, "How many people are we expecting?" When she told me, I felt the immediate need to pray! "Lord, we need help. That's a lot of mouths to feed. Could you please help us to provide what we need?!" It was a fleeting prayer, but heartfelt. We are in a cost-of-living crisis and it would have been easier to manage the winter with a tight belt and a closed wallet but when we bought our house, we promised the Lord that our table would always be His and when He had people to occupy seats in our home, we would honour Him by loving His guests lavishly! As I hung up the phone to God, I said to Kaz, "I think we should support Steve Tate, the local Butcher in Peel! Let's get our meat there." Kaz replied, "That's going to be a little more costly than Tesco," but we agreed - we must trust the Lord for His provision. Four hours later, the postman delivered the mail. When I opened the post box, I couldn't quite believe what I was seeing. There, in an envelope sent to us three days previously via Royal Mail, was a meat voucher for Tate's Traditional Butchery.

The Lord knows our thoughts. He knows our prayers even before they become audible. He knows our needs and He rewards us when our hearts are postured to honour Him with the resources He puts in our hands.

Proverbs 11:25 tells us that, "A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed".

Over the course of my life, I have discovered a secret in my financial reserves - it is impossible to outgive God. God is generous to the generous. Our generosity is rarely tested when our reserves are so full that we don't notice money, time, or energy going out from us. Generosity is tested when there is a personal cost to self or to family. But one thing is certainly true of our great God, when we step out, He steps in.

God is a rewarder of things we do that stem from faith. He loves to bless His children when they demonstrate trust in Him.

The author of Hebrews reminds us that:

"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"

Hebrews 11:6

Certainly, we are living in a very challenging and costly season of life. The temptation is to navigate the financial pinch by tightening our belts, closing our doors and caring only for immediate family. The thing is though, that there are people in our community and in our church family who need to be loved, people who need to experience the love and provision of family.

"do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased"

Hebrews 13:16

The Lord loves sacrificial generosity. It pleases Him to see us live generously towards one another. He refreshes those who refresh others. It is good for the receiver and great for the giver!!

Our Father, listens to the unspoken words of our hearts and He plans to make the desires of our hearts possible even before we articulate our thoughts. If you are in need of refreshing, the very best thing you can do in 2023 is to learn to live generously towards others.

Jesus puts it like this:

*“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you”*

*Luke 6:38*

Jesus is ready to pour out a measure of blessing to you. His measure is dependent upon the extent to which you will pour out what He gives you.

Spend some time today praying for His wisdom. Ask Him to show you somebody that has a specific need at this time. Remember, He prospers those who are generous. He refreshes those who refresh others. He pours in to those who will pour out for Him. Let's faithfully honour Him today and act with love, kindness and generosity to our friends, our family and our community. He knows our hearts and He loves to fill up His children as they pour out His supernatural resources.

- Ask the Lord to highlight somebody in need
- Ask the Lord what He wants you to do about that
- Respond to Him.
- Make a difference today

# PRAYING IN TONGUES

*praying at all times in the Spirit*

EPHESIANS 6:18 (ESV)

Every Christian is in a supernatural battle. Our enemy is not human but spiritual powers and dark forces and so it's not surprising that it's heavenly armour and supernatural weapons that we have been given in order to overcome. (Ephesians 6:10-20)

Unlike modern warfare with drones being operated by personnel behind computers far away on other continents and precision bombs being dropped from tens of thousands of feet in the heavens, the supernatural battle we're involved in is hand-to-hand combat. Paul describes it as a wrestle. It includes *"praying at all times in the Spirit"*. Likewise, Jude, the half-brother of Jesus, and the brother of James - the leader of the church in Jerusalem - writes about, *"praying in the Holy Spirit."* Jude 20b

Paul's secret supernatural weapon was praying in the spirit, or praying in tongues as it is called in other parts of Scripture.

*"I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you."* 1 Corinthians 14:18

There are clearly many different types of tongue.

On the day of Pentecost, it was the ability to share the Gospel in a human language that they'd never spoken before.

There are the tongues of angels in 1 Corinthians 13.

There is a public tongue used in a public church service to bring a prophetic message recorded in 1 Corinthians 14, for which must always have an interpretation.

The tongue that Paul is referring to in 1 Corinthians 14:18 is his private tongue; praying with his spirit.

Paul had one of the most challenging lives ever. He came under great persecution. He was beaten, shipwrecked, flogged, imprisoned, experienced various murder attempts and yet, like King David, he knew how to 'encourage himself in the Lord'. He prayed with his spirit more than anyone he knew.

There is still much confusion and misunderstanding, even in charismatic and Pentecostal churches, about what it means to pray with your spirit. Every person is spirit, soul and body. We relate to God with our spirits. Putting it simply, praying with our spirit, we give our spirit voice. In what seems like the dark ages, although it was only 20 years ago, when we accessed the internet, we did so through a dial-up modem. Your computer made many strange noises, bings and bongs, before a

connection was made which initiated a two-way flow of information, unintelligible to the human ear, but through which a whole new world was accessed.

Similarly, as we start to give our spirit voice, forming words with our mouths, we directly engage with God, spirit to Spirit. We don't actually know what we are praying and saying, however, it's the most effective way of relating to God.

### **What happens when a man prays with his spirit?**

*"The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself" 1 Corinthians 14:4*

Growing up in Northern Ireland if any baby was suffering from colic, it seemed that sleep-deprived parents from all over the nation would find their way to a particular chemist on the Crumlin Road, Belfast, for their special, and secret, colic remedy. No one knew what was in it but without exception every parent had faith in the outcome... a sleeping baby... and rested parents!

Paul's secret tonic for life's challenges was to pray in the spirit – all the time!

Then, as we start praying with our spirits, the Holy Spirit also now prays with and for us, *"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words."* (Romans 8:26) On so many occasions, I just don't know how to pray. Perhaps I'm rushing to the hospital to visit someone seriously ill or it's a crisis in another situation needing supernatural wisdom and intervention. Isn't it wonderful to know that the Spirit prays perfect prayers in accordance with the will of God as we start praying with our spirits?!

If you haven't yet given your spirit voice, if you haven't found release in tongues, why not even today come before the Lord and do so. Some might want a Spirit-filled Christian friend to help them 'get started'.

2023 will be filled with blessings and battles, and breakthrough.

The 'full armour of God' includes this secret and supernatural weapon.

*Pray daily in the spirit and try to increase the amount of time you do so. Some might find it helpful to use worship songs in the background to keep your focus on Jesus as inevitably in life there can be many distractions.*

*Wrestle! Don't allow yourself to fall into the trap of believing that delays are denials. This is a war made up of many skirmishes and battles. Keep persevering, keep on praying and wrestle the enemy, not in the flesh, but by praying in the spirit, and through the power of the Holy Spirit.*

Thank you for partnering with us these past 10 days and let's be expectant that with such unity that the Lord will impart the commanded blessing over the church.