

LIFT: Carried by the Wind of the Spirit (Sailing Series – Part I)

4/26/2009

The notes that follow each question below come from discussions that occurred after the sermon or further consideration of some of the issues raised. They should not be considered the “correct” answers by any means. It is hoped that they will provide a starting point for developing your own discussion of Pastor Steve’s sermons.

1. This new series is about the Holy Spirit and our own spirituality. Who is the most spiritual person you know, and what attributes do they have that give them that status?

Obviously, this will take lots of directions. Some will focus on how religiously devout someone is, while others will emphasize the strength of the person’s witness or how generous someone is. If it fits, point out that each of their examples are living illustrations of people who seem to live not for themselves or within their own faculties, but have something extra going for them.

2. Pastor Steve suggested that we have a tendency to over analyze what it means to be spiritual. What simple test questions did he offer to see how spiritual we are?

Are you walking with the Holy Spirit (or in the power of the Holy Spirit) – or –
Are you walking on your own and merely bringing the Holy Spirit along for the ride?

We need to step back from what we “know” and consider what we don’t know about the Holy Spirit in this study.

3. Read John 3:1-2.

a) How was the man described and what was it he said about Jesus?

Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin (~70 elders & teachers of the Jewish nation), so he knew the Old Testament by heart (literally; he had it memorized). Nicodemus called Jesus Rabbi (teacher) and acknowledged He was sent from God. That was a huge step for a member of a group of men pretty much set on getting rid of Jesus.

b) What did Nicodemus not say?

He did not refer to Jesus as the Messiah, Son of God, or any other reference that might suggest Jesus was anything other than just another prophet. Thus, Nicodemus still seemed to be in the dark about the real basis for why he was drawn to Jesus.

4. a) Read John 3:3-4. Jesus has a chance to witness to a member of the Sanhedrin and bring him into the flock and starts talking in riddles. Why would He do this?

a) Jesus was looking for understanding, not words or knowledge. If Nicodemus was ready to make himself open to the message of Jesus, he would respond appropriately.

b) Read John 3:5-8. What is the bottom line for becoming a Christian?

We need to be born of the Holy Spirit. This second birth means that we no longer are children of the earth, but children of God.

c) Read John 3:9-10. How does Nicodemus respond to this revelation?

He clearly does not get it. This shows that Nicodemus has seen the external signs (the miracles and teaching), but he has not opened his heart and mind to the reality of the fact that this is the Messiah standing in his midst and that this makes all the difference.

[NOTE: Jesus then spends the next 11 verses explaining it all in detail. Depending on how you organize your discussion, you may want to consider spending some time working your way through these verses too.]

5. How are we too often like Nicodemus?

We too are searching; we too ask the right questions, and we too know the right person to ask. Yet, we tend to trust what we “know”, but our eyes are closed to the revealed truth. We’ve already decided what we want or where we want to go and now just want God to help us get there.

It’s not so much that we don’t believe; it’s that we don’t recognize or realize the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

6. What are some words or images that come to mind when you think of the Holy Spirit?

The Bible is full of imagery that is connected with the Holy Spirit. Here are just a few: Third person of the Trinity, unseen presence of God, Counselor, Helper, source of words when we talk with God the Father, He who convicts us of sin (John 16:8), the power filling believers.

7. How do we realize that we are not walking in the Holy Spirit?

There is no fire, no enthusiasm in our lives. We feel there is something missing. The Holy Spirit convicts of this lacking in our lives, helping us feel there has got to be a better way.

8. Considerable time was spent with the imagery of us on a boat by ourselves.

a) Why are we in a sailboat but not using the sail?

We have been given instructions for the way to sail, but we are afraid of what the Holy Spirit will ask us to do. Satan has convinced us that won’t like it. We are afraid of public opinion when everyone sees that we aren’t doing this on our own. It seems so silly that we are laying on the sail, trying to reach the water with our hands so that we can get where we want to go by dog paddling.

b) If we will quit trying to dog paddle under our own power and put up the sail, we can take advantage of the power of the wind. What does the Bible promise to those who will do this?

We will enjoy the fruits of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Gal. 5:22-23)). We will be able to fly and to have any abundant life. We will have given up control of our life, knowing that God rightfully ought to be in control.

9. Read Acts 1:8-9 and Acts 2:1-21. These are a preview of what is yet to come in this series as we consider the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives. What do you see in these verses that might be important to consider in coming weeks?

The Holy Spirit is a source of incredible power, not just strength, but wisdom and talents that we don't know that we have. This defies logic, which, of course, is part of the revelation. When we quit trying to do things under our own power with our own capabilities and let the Holy Spirit guide and empower us, we gain access to supernatural powers, resulting in supernatural outcomes.