

1. Ordinary, regular, not-exactly-perfect people (like you and me) can, after all, be friends with God.

God may be the ultimate high and holy King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Master of everything...but at the same time, He takes notice of each individual on this planet and wants a relationship with us. About two thousand years ago, Jesus came to earth and lived among us to show us what God is like. He spent time extending heaven's olive branch in our direction. Some gladly welcomed this, while others pushed Him away. Eventually, His critics had Him crucified, but He rose again. He desires to have a relationship with each of us. However, relationships are two-way streets, and we must reach out and accept this Savior. When we respond in repentance to a holy God, He declares us acceptable after all. He welcomes us into His spiritual family and begins helping us grow and mature.

2. God is more than just spiritual. He cares about your physical well-being, too.

Why wouldn't He? If He made your body in the first place and gave it the breath of life, it's not unthinkable that He would want it to function smoothly and in good health. This is not a minor thing for Him. After all, He's a loving God. Your body's pain is as much on His mind as the hurt in your soul. When human efforts fail, and doctors run out of answers, the Great Physician awaits. Jesus spent a great deal of His time on earth healing the sick. His disciples promptly took up where He left off.

One of those early leaders was very explicit in his writing: "Is any one of you sick? Call the church elders to pray over you and anoint you with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make you well; the Lord will raise him; "the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." (James 5:14-16) We take these Scriptures at face value and openly practice them in our church. We don't claim to be 100% successful, but we persist in asking God to show His love and concern in tangible ways when the human body is suffering.

3. A whole extra dimension of God's power can be yours.

When Jesus returned to heaven after His rescue mission, a replacement stepped in here on earth: the Holy Spirit. Don't let that name throw you off track; He is a real Person, the third member of the Trinity - not just a 'force' or an 'it.' As Jesus explained just weeks before He ascended, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth...He lives with you and will be in you." (John 14:16-17)

That promise quickly came true in the days and years that followed, as the Holy Spirit invaded the hearts and minds of the early Christians, often in dramatic fashion. First, those early believers spoke in unknown languages as the Spirit gave utterance (Acts 2:4). Timid disciples became bold apostles who were not afraid to challenge the religious power structure. Christians of both high and low status began taking the good news of Jesus across ethnic, racial, gender, and geographical lines. Unique gifts of the Holy Spirit blossomed into miraculous demonstrations - things that only God could do.

The empowerment to do more, go higher, and reach farther for God is available to all believers, not just those in the First Century. The apostle Paul wrote to one Gentile church more than 600 miles from Jerusalem (the site of the original outpouring), "Do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is...Be filled with the Spirit, speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs." (Ephesians 5:17-19)

Here at Sallisaw First Assembly, this is not just theory or history; it's current practice. The Spirit's infilling does not imply that we're better than anyone else. It only means that the Spirit

has been granted more influence over us than He had previously and that we're eager to receive all the divine power we can.

4. Before long, God's Son will head our way again!

We know it sounds pretty far-fetched, but the truth is, Jesus was entirely serious when He said the night before He died on the cross, "I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." (John 14:3) How? The angels who showed up at His ascension gave these details: "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11)

In other words, this isn't a myth or a metaphor. It's an actual, visible event that will shock the world someday. History will abruptly come to its climax with the Second Coming of Jesus. Naturally, everybody asks, "When?" The Bible gives no date; it says we won't know the day or the hour in advance. The all-important question that day - the one that will make the difference between heaven and hell - will be what we did with God's offer of peace and forgiveness, which brings us back to truth number one: the possibility of sinful humans being reconciled to God.

We can summarize it like this:

We focus on Jesus Christ as our Savior, Healer, Baptizer, and Returning King. Our church is all about him—not religion, tradition, denominational competition, money, power, or prestige. Everything we truly need is wrapped up in Him.