

## **MISSION IMPOSSIBLE!**

There is a movie called 'Mission Impossible', starring Tom Cruise. I have never seen it, but I love the title. The word 'mission' seems to have become popular! Our hospitals have mission statements – and so do companies. Starbucks mission statement says 'one person, one cup, one neighbourhood at a time.' Then we hear about the Diplomatic Missions, which are groups of people who represent their country, while living in another country.

According to the dictionary the word 'mission' means:

- An important goal or purpose that is accompanied by a strong conviction.
- Or to be sent somewhere for a specific purpose.

Although the word 'mission' has become popular today, it has been used for generations by the church.

*You may have heard the story of the Englishman, Hudson Taylor, who went to China in 1854 to spread the gospel, and established the China Inland Mission.*

*My father joined a group called 'Men with a Mission' and they went to places like New Guinea and East Malaysia to help build churches and houses for missionaries.*

*William and I have been on many mission trips over the years, to Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Nepal. Our purpose is to share the gospel and build up the believers in those places.*

However we are all called to take part in GOD'S MISSION. Perhaps another way of saying it, is that each one of us have a God given purpose for our lives.

- Jesus said, "Just as the Father has sent me, so I am sending you".
- The very first disciples were called apostles, which means 'sent ones'.
- The Apostle Paul wrote to believers saying they everyone is an ambassador for Christ – we are all part of God's diplomatic mission!
- Jesus gave all his disciples the same commission and that was to "go into all the world".
- In Mark it says something similar, "Go and share the good news ... in my name drive out demons, speak in tongues and heal the sick." In other words GO and SHOW!

When we hear these words we may say, 'Mission Impossible'. 'I can't do that'.

Our lives are often filled with ordinary things – washing dishes, going to the office, cutting the grass, looking after children and doing many other routine things. God knows that! But our lives have a purpose - we are part of God's mission and in midst of everyday life, we have a destiny. Let's put it like this: Wherever you are, you represent Jesus Christ, so take every opportunity to share the Good News about Jesus and show his love by what you do. Pray for people when they have needs, and expect that God will touch peoples' lives.

Still the words, 'Mission Impossible' ring in our ears. And the truth is – it is! Except Jesus has given us his authority to use his name.

- We probably have used his name this week when we prayed: 'In Jesus' name'.
- Jesus has promised to give us his power to enable us to fulfil that mission.
- With God ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE!

Today we are going to focus on receiving and living in the power of the Holy Spirit, to help us fulfil our purpose and mission.

- Perhaps some have come to know Jesus but have not yet been filled or baptised with Holy Spirit.
- Or perhaps we have had this experience but not using the gift God has given us and we are running on an empty tank.

## **THE EXAMPLE OF PHILIP**

Let's look at Philip. The Philip we are going to look at was not one of the apostles. We don't know if he was in the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost, but he may have been. However we do know that this Philip was a believer who was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Early Church had been growing, the word was being preached, the sick healed, and there were prayer meetings and practical ministries, like feeding the many widows who had come to believe in Jesus.

There was a problem though. Some felt they were not being fairly treated so the apostles suggested choosing seven men to take responsibility for distributing the food.

### **Acts 6:2-3**

**<sup>2</sup>So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. <sup>3</sup>Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them**

Interesting – choose men who were known to be full of the Spirit. These men not preaching or teaching – not leading worship – they were doing a practical ministry – just as important that they were full of the Spirit. We can only fulfil God's purposes and mission when we are full of the Spirit.

- One of those chosen was Philip was.
- We are told that the Word of God spread and the number of disciples increased rapidly.
- When each one of us fulfils our part in the mission in the power of the Holy Spirit, the church will grow.

Then persecution came. One of these seven men who was distributing food along with Philip was stoned to death, so the believers scattered, including Philip.

Let's pick up story in Acts 8. As the believers scattered they shared about Jesus wherever they went. Philip went to a city in Samaria.

The mission God has for our lives does not simply come to a halt because of tragic circumstances. Philip was settled in Jerusalem and he had a ministry there, but suddenly things changed – a friend and fellow believer was killed, and everyone fled. God used those tragic circumstances to accomplish his purposes. Jesus had told the apostles that they were to go into all world, beginning in Jerusalem, but then go to Judea and Samaria.

God's purposes were coming to pass in an unexpected way!

This is often true in our lives. Unexpected things happen and this brings change. It's not easy, but God's purpose for our lives, his mission has not changed – he uses those very circumstances to accomplish his mission.

- Philip went to Samaria. There was no church there, but as he was going, he was sharing about Jesus, praying for those with needs. Demons manifested and he cast them out, the crippled came to him and they were healed. God moved!
- When the people SAW what God was doing, and heard the good news – responded.
- All over the world God is doing these same things today, often in places where there is trouble and persecution and he is using his people to GO and SHOW.

As Philip walked in step with the Holy Spirit God used him in amazing ways. Eventually he settled in Caesarea with his family and became known as Philip the Evangelist, and the father of 4 daughters who all prophesied.

You may say: 'but that was Philip'! We have people like Philip in our church too, but God wants to use all of us in different ways and I believe we have no idea what he has in store for us. However what is important, is that we are filled with His Spirit, so we can fulfil mission for our lives.

So we have looked at an example of a man who was full of the Spirit. This is the key – to be filled with the Spirit.

## **WE NEED TO BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT**

Let's look back into the story in Acts 8 and see what happened.

### **Acts 8:12**

**<sup>12</sup> But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.**

So people in Samaria listened to the message, then believed and received it. Let's look at several verses that speak about this.

### **John 1:12**

**<sup>12</sup> Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.**

### **Mark 16:16**

**<sup>16</sup> Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.**

The Holy Spirit had begun a work in hearts of these people and Philip led them to the Lord Jesus Christ. One of those who believed was a man called Simon. He had been a sorcerer or a magician, and was well known in that city. In fact the people revered him as if he was a god. But he too saw the miracles Philip performed and believed the message and was baptised.

*When my husband William reached out to the people in an Iban village, one of the first men to come to Christ was the 'bomoh' or witchdoctor. He was baptised in the muddy river beside the longhouse and when he believed it opened the door to many others coming to Christ. This is what happened in Samaria.*

Although these believers had been baptised in water they still lacked the power of the Holy Spirit. They had known the power of the evil one, and if they were going to stand strong they needed the power of the Spirit. So we read that Peter and John came down from Jerusalem, specifically to pray for these new believers to be baptised in the Spirit.

**Acts 8:17**

**<sup>17</sup> Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.**

### **WHAT HAPPENED?**

If power of God comes on your life, you know! So what happened to these believers? We are not directly told. But Simon, this man who had known the power of the evil one, saw what happened and he wanted the ability to lay hands on people and impart the Holy Spirit too. He even offered money to have that power. Obviously something did happen – something supernatural. He could see it.

Other passages in the book of Acts also show us that when Holy Spirit came upon believers they spoke in tongues, and sometimes they prophesied.

Many of us have had this experience, but some perhaps have not and long to see the power of God in their lives. Perhaps you have spoken in tongues in the past, but no longer use that gift.

**Ephesians 5:15**

**<sup>15</sup> Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. <sup>18</sup> Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit**

It's so easy to go back to walking and living in our own strength and using our natural mind. And we try to fulfil God's purpose or mission in our own strength – and the Christian life seems so difficult. It is not meant to be like that. The key is to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit.

## **HOW TO BE FILLED WITH HOLY SPIRIT**

### **1. DESIRE**

Peter and John knew these believers needed the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter had struggled to follow Jesus but when the Holy Spirit came upon him on the Day of Pentecost it made a big difference in his life.

Although we need His power, we have to want to receive it.

*In Asia, when you visit a home the host will immediately give you a drink. Usually they don't ask if you would like one, but the cultural norm is to serve a guest with a drink. The weather is hot and humid, so you are very thankful. Sometimes though, you may not be thirsty, or you don't really like what you have been served, so you just take a few sips to be polite!*

God is offering us the water of the Holy Spirit – to quench our spiritual thirst and overflow our lives – but we need to long for it. Not just to take a sip to be polite, but to want to drink all he has for us.

#### **John 7:37-39**

**<sup>37</sup> On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. <sup>38</sup> Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." <sup>39</sup> By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.**

*William and I have had opportunity to pray for different ones over the years. We discovered that those who are thirsty will receive easily. There was a young teacher at a school camp in East Malaysia who was thirsty, and when we prayed, the Holy Spirit came upon her and she spoke in tongues. She was so filled with joy that she danced around the basketball court! Years later this teacher became the Vice Principal of the school our children attended. Her daughter was also filled with the Spirit and came with us on a mission trip to the Philippines.*

### **2. BELIEVE**

God had shown John the Baptist that when Holy Spirit came upon someone, that would be the one who would baptise others with the Spirit. And that one was Jesus! There are different ways that God works in our lives, and we see this in the book of Acts.

- When Peter and John went down to Samaria they laid hands on the new believers to receive the Holy Spirit. Often people receive when someone lays hands on them.
- On another occasion Peter went to Cornelius' home, and because of his openness to the message and hunger for the things of God, the Holy Spirit came upon him, and the others in the room.

*My experience was similar to this. I was in Bible College at the time, in my bedroom. I had been praying for some time to be baptised in the Spirit, and then one night he came, and I began speaking in tongues.*

We need to come with expectation that Jesus will give us what we ask for. Those who lived in Samaria had seen and experienced the powers of darkness – and some of us have too. Sorcerers, witchdoctors, and others with demonic power are common in many countries, and Christians sometimes are afraid they will receive something that is not good. However we can trust God's promise.

### **Luke 11:13**

**<sup>13</sup> If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"**

- Jesus said if your son asked for a fish would you give him a snake?
- If he asked for an egg would you give him a scorpion?
- Of course not! No good parent would do such a thing and nor would our Heavenly Father.

We can trust that when we come to Jesus he will give us something good – yes it may not be something we understand with our natural mind – but we can trust him. One of difficulties many of us have is that we want to be in control. We find it difficult to fully yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit.

*I am not a sporty person but I like swimming. Some people are afraid of the water especially if they cannot hold on or touch the bottom. However I have discovered that when you relax your body it is easy to float as the water will carry you along. In the same way, we need to come to Jesus, trust him fully and yield ourselves to his Spirit.*

### **3. RECEIVE**

We need to desire what God has promised to give us and to believe he will give us his Spirit, and then to receive. Jesus said that if anyone was thirsty to come to him and drink. We receive in faith.

It is not just standing and enjoying God's presence, but to come in faith and drink in the Spirit of God. In your mind and heart ask him to fill you with the Holy Spirit. Then receive in faith.

If you fill a cup with water and keep pouring, it is going to flow over the top before too long. This is what Jesus wants to do in our lives. In John 7:37 Jesus said:

**John 7:37 'and out of your innermost being will FLOW rivers of living water'.**

The usual evidence that this overflow is taking place is that we begin to speak in a new language, not a language we have learnt, but a language given by the Holy Spirit. This supernatural language will help you worship and praise the Lord and express your love for him. It's a language you can use daily to enable you to stay full of the Spirit and built up in your faith.

Today we began by speaking about our mission. God has called each one of us to be part of his mission and the purpose he has for our lives. Just as he sent Jesus into the world, he sends us to be his representative, his diplomatic mission team. He has given us authority to use his name and he wants us to receive his power. Without him – it is impossible, but with him, all things are possible! Amen!