



# Foundation of Faith

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## *Gifts* for the Church

Natural and Spiritual Gifts

“I Will Pour Out My Spirit”

The Grace That Teaches Us

Speaking in Tongues—Often Misunderstood

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## Editorial

*Dear Reader!*

*We are grateful to God for His wonderful, eternal Word. The Holy Scriptures reveal so much to us that is hidden from the natural, human mind. Long ago, Moses declared: "The secret things belong to the LORD our God" (Deuteronomy 29:29). And the Apostle Paul proclaimed: "[God] made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure" (Ephesians 1:9). The apostle also desired that his readers attain "all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:2-3).*

*The Apostle Paul also speaks of the mystery of salvation and shows that anyone who comes to Jesus, repents, confesses their sins, and believes in Christ is a child of God and an heir of Jesus Christ. Yes, through redemption we are bought at a high price and belong to God's people and His church.*

*When the Savior asked His disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter spontaneously replied: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." This confession of faith, which stands like a rock on divine truth, is now followed by Jesus' promise: "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (see Matthew 16:15-18).*

*Not Peter, John, Thomas, or any other man, be he reformer, prophet, or preacher, is the Lord and head of the church of God, but Jesus Christ alone. What many today do not understand is wonderfully explained in the Gospel. Yes, "this is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:32).*

*Brother Ludwig Besler's hymn expresses it like this:*

*Christ is building His own temple,  
Building it with living stones;  
Follow Him as our example,  
For the church is His alone.  
Jesus is the one foundation,  
And we are the living stones.  
Jesus is the firm foundation of the church,  
Which is His own.*

*Yes, Christ is the master builder, but He needs helpers in this work. And He wants to equip us, as His helpers, with various gifts, making us useful tools in His service.*

*H. D. Nimz*



# The Last Tract



Every Sunday afternoon, after the morning service at their church, the pastor and his eleven-year-old son would go out into their town and hand out gospel tracts. On this particular Sunday afternoon, it was very cold outside and rain was pouring down. The boy bundled up in his warmest clothes and said, “Okay, Dad, I’m ready.”

His dad asked, “Ready for what?”

“Dad, it’s time for us to get our tracts and go out.”

Dad responds, “Son, it’s very cold outside and it’s pouring rain.”

The boy gave his dad a surprised look, asking, “But, Dad, aren’t people still going to hell, even though it’s raining?”

“Son, I am not going out in this weather,” Dad answered. Despondently the boy asked, “Dad, can I go, please?”

His father hesitated for a moment then said, “Ok son, you can go. Here are the tracts. But be careful!”

“Thanks Dad!” And with that he was off and out into the rain.

This eleven-year-old boy walked the streets of the town going door to door and handing everybody he met in the street a gospel tract. After two hours of walking in the rain he was soaking wet and down to his very last tract. He stopped on a corner and looked for someone to hand the tract to, but the streets were totally deserted.

Then he turned toward the first home he saw and started up to the front door and rang the doorbell. Nobody answered. He rang it again and again but still no one answered. He waited, but still no answer. Finally this eleven-year-old trooper turned to leave but something stopped him. Again, he turned to the door and rang the bell and knocked loudly on the door with his fist. He waited, something holding him there on the front porch. He rang again, and this time the door slowly opened.

Standing in the doorway was a very sad looking elderly lady. She softly asked, “What can I do for you, son?”

With radiant eyes and a smile that lit up her world this little boy said, “Ma’am, I’m sorry if I disturbed you, but I just want to tell you that Jesus really does love you. I came to give you my very last tract which will tell you all about Jesus and His great love.” With that he handed her his last tract, and turned to leave.

She called to him as he departed, “Thank you, son. And God bless you.”

Well, the following Sunday morning in Church, the pastor was behind the pulpit and as the service began he asked, “Does anybody have a testimony or want to say anything?”

Slowly, in the back row of the church, an elderly lady stood to her feet. As she began to speak a look of glorious radiance came from her face as she said, “None of you in this church knows me. I’ve never been here before. You see, before last Sunday I was not a Christian. My husband passed on some time ago, leaving me totally alone in this world.

“Last Sunday was a particularly cold and rainy day, and it was even more dreary in my heart. I came to the

end of the line where I no longer had any hope or will to live. So I took a rope and a chair and ascended the stairway into the attic of my home. I fastened the rope securely to a rafter in the roof then stood on the chair and fastened the other end of the rope around my neck. Standing on that chair, so lonely and brokenhearted, I was about to leap off when suddenly the loud ringing of my doorbell downstairs startled me.

“I thought, ‘I’ll wait a minute, and whoever it is will go away.’ I waited and waited, but the ringing doorbell seemed to get louder and more insistent and then the person ringing also started knocking loudly. I thought to myself again, ‘Who on earth could this be? Nobody ever rings my bell or comes to see me.’ I loosened the rope from my neck and started for the front door. All the while the bell rang louder and louder.

“When I opened the door and looked, I could hardly believe my eyes. There on my front porch was the most radiant and angelic little boy I had ever seen in my life. His smile, oh, I could never describe it to you! And the words that came from his mouth caused my heart, that had long been dead, to leap to life as he exclaimed with a cherub-like voice, ‘Ma’am, I just came to tell you that Jesus really does love you.’

“Then he gave me this gospel tract that I now hold in my hand. As the little angel disappeared back out into the cold and rain, I closed my door and slowly read every word. Then I went up to my attic to get my rope and chair. I wouldn’t be needing them any more. You see, I am now a happy child of the King. Since the address of your church was on the back of this tract, I have come here to personally say thank you to God’s little angel who came just in the nick of time. By doing so, He spared my soul from eternity in hell.”

There were now no dry eyes in the church. And as shouts of praise and honor to the King resounded off the very rafters of the building, the pastor descended from the pulpit to the front pew where the “little angel” was seated. He took him in his arms and sobbed uncontrollably.

Probably no church has had a more glorious moment. And this universe has likely never seen a father more proud of his son except for one—a Father who also allowed His Son to go out into a cold and dark world to tell us of God’s love. Because of Him we are saved.

*The Beautiful Way*

# Gifts of the Spirit

God has fulfilled the promise of the Son of God: “I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18) and has sent the Holy Spirit as God’s Helper (John 14:16). Through the Holy Spirit, people are born again and become children of God. This makes them part of God’s family and gives them the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9).

The Word of God shows us that the Holy Spirit gives gifts of the Spirit to the children of God (1 Corinthians 12:4–11). These God-given gifts are not something special for exceptionally spiritual people. Rather, they are an extremely necessary gift from God to the church. Where these gifts are visible, the Holy Spirit works through them—not in human power, but through divine working. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul describes a series of gifts that give us an idea of their diversity: Wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, discerning of spirits, speaking in tongues and their interpretation. Every single gift is a work of the Spirit of God.

“But one and the same Spirit works all these things,” writes Paul, “distributing to each one individually as He wills” (verse 11). This makes it very clear that these gifts are not the work of humans. They cannot be learned, acquired, or produced. At the same time, this word shows us that it is not us but the Holy Spirit who has authority over the gifts. They are not to be used for our benefit, but for a much greater purpose: to bless and build up the church.

These gifts are nevertheless something very exclusive. Only children of God who are born again spiritually can receive these gifts of God. Jesus says: “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). Only this life from God creates the prerequisite. It is not religious activity, confession, or training that enables us, but the reality worked by the Spirit of God in the lives of the redeemed.

The disciples, called into ministry by Jesus, had experienced the rebirth that Jesus spoke about with Nicodemus (John 3). They had known the Holy Spirit

since that time (14:17), for He worked in them, with them, and through them. In various places in the Gospels we read about the effects of the gifts in them. It had become normal for them to preach, heal the sick and cast out demons, so much so that they were surprised when they did not see the expected results in one particular case (Matthew 17:19). But with their complete surrender to God and the work of God at Pentecost, they also experienced a significant change in the use of the gifts. God was able to use them for greater works and work more powerfully through them. For this reason too, it is essential that every child of God experiences entire sanctification and the fullness of the Holy Spirit, just as the disciples did at Pentecost in Jerusalem.

## *They thrive in a healthy spiritual life*

God does not give us gifts so that we can present ourselves as something special. Rather, they should enable us to serve God and each other better. A child of God, filled with the Spirit of God, grows to divine maturity. God has destined our lives to be rich in fruit.

Our regular, consistent life with God, our prayer and Bible study, our quiet time with God, and our fellowship with God’s children doesn’t simply promote our spiritual growth. This healthy spiritual state also allows us to recognize our gifts and develop them. These fruits do not grow from our human abilities, but from a life hidden with Christ in God.

Paul shows the Galatians the fruit of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (5:22–23). This is what the Holy Spirit works in our lives. And this fruit is also the framework in which spiritual gifts can develop in a healthy way. Without this fruit of the Spirit, even great gifts could not bring blessing.

In John 15:4–5, Jesus shows us an important secret in the kingdom of God: “Abide in me, and I in you. . . . for without me you can do nothing.” Separated from Him, we can be active, but we will not be able to bear spiritual fruit. Paul points out in 1 Corinthians 13

that all, even the greatest, most extraordinary gifts are completely worthless without love. It is the principle of the kingdom of God: only in Christ can we bear fruit. And the gifts become a blessing for others in a healthy way.

### ***Spiritual gifts are needed in the church***

The needs of the church are extremely diverse. Every time, every place, every society has its own needs. The Spirit of God sees the needs and gives the gifts as required “for the common good.” It is healthy and spiritually normal for the church to have an abundance of gifts. Paul rejoiced for the Corinthians that they came “short in no gift.” Does it not encourage us that Paul was able to observe this, even though there were considerable challenges and needs there at the same time? The gifts also show that our Lord and God is merciful, gracious, patient, and faithful. He is a God of love who builds and protects His church.

In 1 Corinthians 12, from verse 12 onwards, Paul shows how the members of the church, with their different tasks, are very different like members of one body. No one can consider themselves more important, no one can say to another: “I don’t need you.” Everyone has their place, everyone is needed. God has created us to be dependent on Him and on our brothers and sisters. The gifts do not work independently of each other, but together, so that we are all built up, encouraged and strengthened.

In the letter to the Ephesians (4: 11–13), Paul delves deeper into this topic and shows the offices and ministries of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers. They all have their place “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” The task and goal of the gifts is not for any one person to stand out, but for them to grow together in a healthy way to maturity, “to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” There is no hierarchy here, but complementarity. The Spirit of God uses the diversity of gifts for development in unity.

### ***Growth and development***

The gifts of the Spirit should serve all of us, including the bearer of the respective gift, for spiritual growth. In our closeness to our Master, we recognize the profound truth: everything we are, everything we are allowed to do, is ultimately God’s grace. It is not our merit or anything excellent about our person (1 Corinthians 4: 7). Everything lasting, done with authority and blessing, is done by the Spirit of God alone. Does this truth not make us worship God in deep humility and gratitude?

Paul exhorts the church in Philippi to humility: “[F]ulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. *Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Philippians 2: 2–4). This humble attitude protects us, especially when success is on the horizon. It helps us to serve, and to do so out of heartfelt love. God gives us gifts by grace, but in humility He keeps us in the mind of Christ.

Among the disciples, questions of rank were often a critical issue. But Jesus made it clear that “whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (Matthew 23: 12). Spiritual authority is not shown in loudness or dominance, but in the depth of the relationship with God. True spirituality is quiet, serving, sincere and full of power because it is worked by the Holy Spirit.

God has also given His church gifts today. We need them. We cannot exist today as the church of God if the Holy Spirit does not have the space and freedom to give the gifts as needed and to whom He wills. And we can gratefully acknowledge this and then give space and agency to allow these gifts to become effective.

Hermann Vogt  
Gifhorn, Germany



# Discover and Bring Forth the Gifts of the Spirit!

*“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.”*

*1 Corinthians 12: 4–7*



In these verses, we are shown the triune God. First, the Spirit of God is mentioned, who gives gifts to the children of God. Then we have our Lord Jesus Christ, on whose behalf we are to serve. And we have God the Father mentioned, who empowers these gifts in us. The triune God has done everything from His side. Yet we so often hear: Where are the gifts? Yes, that is a good question: Where are the gifts?

Scripture says that we should serve one another with the gifts that the Spirit of God works in us (1 Peter

4: 10–11). He still does this today. Some of these gifts are listed in various places in the New Testament, but there are many more that are not listed. The Spirit sees which gifts are lacking in the church, which ones can help the church in its situation, or which ones are beneficial for the growth and effectiveness of the church. Some lead to a certain ministry, whereby the Spirit often also assigns a certain responsibility (e.g. pastor or counselor) or a more general gift (e.g. of consolation). But every gift is important and indispensable.



### ***Spiritual gifts for the common good***

A church can only develop according to God's vision if each individual contributes with their God-given gift (Ephesians 4: 12). God gives gifts to equip, strengthen, and encourage believers, so that He can be glorified in the exercising of the gifts. The Spirit wants us to live out the gifts He has given. If we fail to do so, we are not fulfilling God's will.

The origin of a gift of grace is always God. The Spirit of God distributes gifts according to His will (1 Corinthians 12: 11). Possessing a gift is a great blessing, but it also brings with it a great responsibility to exercise it correctly and appropriately for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 12: 7).

Since we are not masters of the gifts, but only "stewards" of God's grace (1 Peter 4: 10–11), we should be aware that one day we will have to give an account of how we have used God's gifts (or whether we have used them at all!). If the gifts are not exercised or if it is no longer the Spirit who determines the exercising of the gifts, but people, this inevitably threatens the unity of the church.

### ***How can I recognize which gift I have?***

We are repeatedly told in the Bible that we should use our gifts. But nowhere is it said how we can find out what our gifts are. Paul seems to assume that children of God will recognize what spiritual gifts they have and that the Holy Spirit will reveal them as well.

Here are some suggestions that can help you find out what gift the Spirit has given you:

- You have a special joy in a task and find fulfillment in it.
- You don't have to be pushed to do this task, but you are drawn to it, and it leads to you fulfilling it conscientiously and faithfully out of an inner drive.
- Other members of the faith will sense that you have a special gift for something and will give you feedback.
- The use of a gift leads to benefit. It results in blessing. Are brothers and sisters particularly addressed or touched when you do a certain thing? Does it lead to God-ordained changes in their behavior or lives?
- The Spirit gives special strength to exercise the gifts. Are there tasks where you particularly feel this? And do others feel it too? There is also power and authority in every gift.

However, the Holy Spirit can also show what His will is in various other ways. We do not want to put Him in a box or limit Him in any way.

As local congregations, we can develop a church culture that gives freedom to the gifts of the Spirit or, perhaps even unconsciously, restricts them. We can ask for God's working and open ourselves up to it, or we can develop rigid church structures and be critically opposed to any change. The Spirit of God wants to work on us and develop us further. He also wants to change our local congregations to become deeper spiritually and more effective. That is why a congregation which allows a variety of gifts to be used in the church is rich.

A congregation should have the spiritual maturity to recognize gifts in brothers and sisters and should encourage individuals to use them, for it was the will of God who gave this gift that it should be used. Both as leaders in the church, and as brothers and sisters, let us ask God to open our eyes to recognize the gifts in the churches. Every gift that is given will be for the good of the church and for the glory of God.

If God has placed people with certain gifts in a church, we should not deny them the opportunity to develop spiritually, to grow, and to become a blessing to others by using their gifts. We also have a responsibility as a church in this respect.

Sometimes it can be helpful to simply start with a ministry in some area. God will reveal whether you have a gift that will be fulfilled in this task. Do brothers and sisters feel a special blessing and authority in this ministry? The Spirit wants to show us the gifts we have. But we must also give opportunities for them to be discovered.

However, don't just look for what you consider "special" gifts. Rather, do not hesitate to do even the smallest jobs that arise in the church. God's Word says that we may "desire spiritual gifts." That is true. But love for God and our brothers and sisters is above all else. In this love we may serve one another as well as in all other duties that arise.

Are you ready to use what God has given you in His grace for the glory of God and for the benefit of your brothers and sisters? He will give you the necessary strength, wisdom, and guidance to carry out the gift, task, or ministry responsibly and humbly according to His wishes. God bless you in this.

*Markus Schmelzle  
Pforzheim, Germany*

# Natural and Spiritual Gifts

All of us have natural gifts. Some of us are good with our hands. Some of us have good memories. Some enjoy working outside, others prefer office jobs. We are born with certain aptitudes. Some have a gift for music, others are tone-deaf. Some can become good artists, others, like myself, cannot draw well. Some are good with numbers and mathematics. For others, working with numbers is challenging. Not everyone has the same gift or ability, naturally speaking. Yet, even if one has ability, it is still necessary to practice and to nurture those skills. An Olympic athlete needs to have natural ability, but natural ability alone will never give the athlete success. Practice and training are essential. Our natural abilities that we are born with are gifts of God. Some of what has been said about natural gifts also applies to spiritual gifts. But there are differences. When a person dedicates his life to the Lord, the Holy Spirit may give him or her a special gift for furthering the Kingdom of God.

“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit *of all*” (1 Corinthians 12:4–7).

Naturally speaking, God gave each person their own gift or ability for their own benefit. Spiritually speaking, the Spirit of God gives spiritual gifts, but these gifts are given so we can serve God and the church better. They are given “for the profit *of all*” (1 Corinthians 12:7).

Not everyone receives the same gift or gifts. “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills” (1 Corinthians 12:11).

In 1 Corinthians 12:28 there is a list of spiritual gifts and ministries. The first three listed are apostles, prophets, and teachers.

“God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that mira-

cles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues” (1 Corinthians 12:28).

Apostles, prophets, and teachers are appointed by God. But if the Spirit has bestowed such a gift to an individual, the person is still to nurture, practice and refine the exercising of that gift. What is useful for the improvement of natural abilities can also apply to the spiritual. For example, Paul writes to Timothy: “when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:5–7).

Timothy is told to stir up the gift of God within him. He was also taught the Scriptures since childhood, and had the genuine faith of his mother and grandmother as helps to enhance the gift of ministry given to him. Paul encourages him and writes:

“Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership” (1 Timothy 4:12–14).

The Greek word for gift used here is charisma. According to Adam Clarke, the word charisma refers to “the gifts and graces of the Divine Spirit, which Timothy received when set apart to the work of an evangelist by the imposition of St. Paul’s hands, and by that of the presbytery or eldership.” Timothy was chosen to be the evangelist and bishop of the Church in Ephesus. He was encouraged to “stir up the gift,” that is, to practice and enhance it.

What is your spiritual gift? Sometimes people that are a great blessing do not even know how much the Lord is using them for His glory. I know a sister who knew she was saved, and when she heard a message on entire sanctification, she went to an altar of prayer



and totally dedicated herself to God. As she put it, she had decided: “behind me every bridge that leads to the world has been demolished.” After leading a Spirit-filled life for many years, she told her nephew: “I do not know that I have a spiritual gift.” “You don’t know?” He was very surprised that she did not know. Personally, I think she has the gift of hospitality. In the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14–30), she considered herself to be a person who only received one talent. “However,” she said, “I did not bury it in the ground.” She did what she could. Here is someone who no doubt had a spiritual gift, but was not aware of it.

If you do not have a spiritual gift, ask God to give you one. Or if you are living a godly life, and do not know what your spiritual gift is, perhaps other Christians you know can detect a spiritual gift in you, and let you know what your gift is. And if you have been given a spiritual gift by the Lord, evangelizing, teaching, encouraging, or one of the gifts listed in 1 Corin-

thians 12, then “stir up the gift of God which is in you” (2 Timothy 1:6). If you do not know what it is, pray to the Lord to show you what it is or ask other Christians what they think it might be. If you do not have a spiritual gift, ask God for the infilling of His Holy Spirit, and ask the Spirit to give you a gift for service in His Kingdom. Some people confuse the term spiritual gift with the fruit of the Spirit. Every Christian must display the fruit (singular, not fruits) of the Spirit. But the fruit of the Spirit is different from a spiritual gift. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22–23). There is one fruit with many characteristics. But there are many gifts, any one of which is there to help us serve the church better, “each one for the profit *of all*” (1 Corinthians 12:4–7).

*Gerhard Mielke  
Hamilton, Ontario*



# Speaking in Tongues— A Gift Often Misunderstood

**T**he biblical gift of speaking in tongues is described in the second chapter of Acts in the New Testament. We read that at Pentecost the disciples were suddenly able to fluently speak many foreign languages—languages they had never learned before. Two other places in Acts mention this miracle as well. In each instance it was a special sign from God.

In the charismatic movement, there is much talk of the end-time restoration of all gifts as they existed in the time of the apostles, which is said to be especially evident in the ability of so-called ‘speaking in tongues.’ Since this gift existed in the early church, it is assumed that it should not be missing in the lives of believers today. So-called speaking in tongues was practically the initial spark of the charismatic movement and remains a defining element to this day.

In 1901, a prolonged prayer meeting was held in the United States by a group of Bible students. They had come to the assurance that speaking in tongues, as experienced at Pentecost, should still be attainable to everyone today. They also drew the conclusion that speaking in tongues was a necessary sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Their teacher, Charles Fox Parham, encouraged his students in their search. Determined, they pleaded with God for this experience. Suddenly, one of the female students began to speak in “tongues,” supposedly in Chinese. A few days later, about half the students, as well as Parham himself, experienced “speaking in tongues.” This was the beginning of the modern Pentecostal movement. The euphoria spread like wildfire. Parham and his students were convinced that they had experienced the same thing as the apostles at Pentecost. They firmly believed they now had the ability to speak to the heathen in foreign languages on the mission field. However, Charles Parham and his Bible students never discovered the supernatural sign they were seeking. Their expectations were completely disappointed—and that has not changed to this day.

Millions of people today may speak in so-called tongues, but those same millions are never able to do what the apostles did at Pentecost. They are not able to

speak in genuine, existing foreign languages unknown to them. The much-celebrated gift was clearly a counterfeit.

Now there are two ways to deal with this: I can honestly admit that my “gift” was not biblical and that I’ve been on the wrong track. Or I can cling to the counterfeit and try to justify why it is correct anyway. The latter was predominantly chosen. It was simply claimed that there are two different kinds of speaking in tongues. One is the gift of languages as at Pentecost with real, existing human languages. The other is a form of speaking in tongues that has nothing to do with real languages, but which fits well with the charismatic practice of speaking in tongues. In other words, speaking that is generally unintelligible, and that, if at all, can only be interpreted by specially gifted interpreters.

Of course, with such a claim, one can avoid any serious testing of the gift. How can one test or evaluate something no one understands anyway? And who can determine whether the interpretations given are correct? The authenticity test, in which multiple independent interpreters are to assess the same instance of tongue-speaking, is a reliably shocking experience for devout charismatics. For this reason, this test is usually avoided.

Another attempt to justify the counterfeit is in the claim that it must be an angelic language (which, of course, no one can understand either). Apart from the theological baselessness of this claim, it fails to recognize that charismatic speaking in tongues is not a language. Rather, it is an arbitrary stringing together of sounds, sometimes mixed with known words. It has no structure and no vocabulary—it is meaningless babble. To declare this an angelic language borders on blasphemy, as someone aptly concluded: “Poor angels, if that’s supposed to be their language!”

It is a woeful irony of history that those who claim to align themselves most with the Holy Spirit through their charismatic confession dishonor Him the most. A substantial error of the charismatic movement lies

in the fact that from the beginning it reached out for spectacular gifts, while scarcely seeking the gift of discerning spirits (1 Corinthians 12: 10).

Biblical speaking in tongues, where people could suddenly speak real, existing foreign languages without prior learning, was a sign in early church history, especially for the people of Israel (Isaiah 28: 11 and 1 Corinthians 14: 21–22). It showed that God, in the gospel age, wanted to speak to all people in all languages. Israel's exclusivity as the sole chosen people of God had come to an end. In the days of the apostles, this was an outrageous idea for many and a major point of contention—unlike today. That is why the gift then had a different meaning than it does today.

Even though the main purpose of the gift of languages was fulfilled over time, the gift never completely ceased. According to Mark 16: 15–17, speaking in tongues is also placed in the context of missionary work, and in that context, the gift continued to appear—not massively, but here and there as a special aid from God.

Likewise, it can still be experienced today. For example, the following is reported about Brother Berzins, a brother from Estonia in the Church of God: During the time between the two world wars, the work of the church of God in Estonia grew significantly. At that time, Brother Berzins had a deep desire to offer himself for service in the Lord's work. He longed to attend a Bible course for spiritual preparation. Such courses were held at the church's mission home in Essen, but only in German—a language Brother Berzins did not understand. In his desire to be more useful to God, he asked the Lord to allow him to understand this foreign language without previous instruction. So, he went to the Bible school trusting in God—and was able to follow the teaching well. Over time, he also learned to understand and speak German.

A similar story happened to an older brother I know personally. God had laid it on his heart to bring the Gospel to people in Brazil, but he spoke very little Portuguese. Nevertheless, he experienced how God

could use his limited attempts to clearly share the Gospel with people.

Over the centuries, the gift of speaking in tongues has appeared again and again in connection with missionary work among people of different languages. However, receiving this gift has always remained something special—an exception to the rule. Hudson Taylor had to learn Chinese, John Hyde had to learn Hindi, and missionaries in the jungles of South America had to learn nearly unknown languages to work effectively.

From this we can conclude that God generally expects us to do everything within our power to be useful. But beyond that, the almighty God is able to compensate for our weaknesses and shortcomings.

In God's Word, we find more than 20 spiritual gifts. Many of these, such as the gift of mercy, are completely unspectacular from a human point of view. (Romans 12: 3–8; 1 Corinthians 12: 7–10, 28–31; Ephesians 4: 7–11; 1 Peter 4: 10–11; 2 Peter 1: 21.) But as different as these gifts may be, they are all given for the service of others—never for the person who has received the gift themselves. The misguided pursuit of speaking in tongues arises from a different (and thus incorrect) understanding of the gifts of the Spirit.

For the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not given:

- as a sign of a high level of spirituality (only the fruit of the Spirit does that!)
- for self-assurance of one's own spiritual status
- as a shortcut for resolving inner problems
- to satisfy a craving for spectacular experiences

Spiritual gifts are fundamentally never for oneself, but always for serving others. If I faithfully use them, I will also be blessed—but that is a side effect, not the purpose of the gift.

Let us pray that God gives the Church more spiritual gifts, so that we can better serve one another and so that ministry to individuals and to the community of believers may become more thorough and effective.

*Christian Röss  
Herford, Germany*

## *“I will pour out my Spirit”*

*“And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh . . . And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days: and they shall prophesy.”*

*Acts 2: 17–18*

Not everyone may understand what this verse is trying to tell us. The phrase “pour out” makes us think of a liquid, which the Holy Spirit is not. The Holy Spirit is a person, He is part of the Godhead, which makes the phrase “pour out” noteworthy.

Another translation renders “pour out” as “flow out.”

When there is a heavy rainfall outside or we are even caught in it, we usually say: “It is pouring.” Our text should also be understood in this sense. When it says: “I will pour out,” we recognize that this represents a significant work of God.

The disciples had been prepared for this event. At His ascension, Jesus gave them the comforting promise: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (Acts 1:8a). They had been so profoundly taught about this Spirit that their Master could say: “You know Him” (John 14:17).

He described Him as the “Spirit of truth,” who would guide them into all truth. He made it clear that this Spirit comes from the Father and will bear witness to Him (Christ). He called Him the “Helper” (or the Comforter or Advocate in other translations) and explained: “the Holy Spirit . . . will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you” (John 14:26). He also impressed upon them that this Spirit would punish the world for sin and give clarity what sin, righteousness, and judgment really are. Particularly noteworthy is the clear statement that “He [the Holy Spirit] will glorify Me” (John 16:14). These explanations are necessary for us as well.

The disciples back then needed to learn to distinguish the Holy Spirit from all other spirits by these clear

characteristics, and we need to learn the same in our time. Today, very often, various strange and false spirits are mistaken for the Holy Spirit! People give themselves over to the influence of these spirits, behave in a directly offensive manner and yet believe that they are under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Oh, may we pay attention to the characteristics of the Holy Spirit which Jesus gave us.

Of course, the Holy Spirit can reveal Himself in such a powerful way that people are astonished and horrified. This is what happened on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. The disciples were prepared for this day. Their gathering was characterized by unanimity and oneness. They stood in obedient and God-fearing readiness to receive the promised gift.

Luke explains the outpouring of the Holy Spirit using two symbols: He compared the powerful work of the Holy Spirit with the purifying power of fire and His invigorating, driving effect with the power of a mighty wind.

In such a way, the disciples were filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit, who could now work through them. This caused astonishment among many and others mockingly said: “They are full of new wine.” The Apostle Peter took a stand against this derogatory assessment and declared: “[T]hese are not drunk, as you suppose . . . But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of my Spirit on all flesh’” (Acts 2: 15–17).

The time had come and the promise given was now fulfilled. Everything happened in an orderly way, and wherever the Holy Spirit worked, it was done with the clear characteristics that Jesus had taught.



We can therefore say with complete certainty: in an assembly where these characteristics do not exist, the Holy Spirit does not exist either. All improper, strange, disorderly and even offensive behavior is not of the Spirit of God, even if one claims that it is. Rather, the Holy Spirit keeps us far away and free from the peculiarities of other spirits and from what they do. It is therefore necessary to know the nature and characteristics of the Holy Spirit and to abstain from the influence of all other spirits.

The Holy Spirit had indeed been poured out on the praying crowd of disciples, but His powerful work encompasses “all that is called man.” It is true that He works on the hearts of God’s children in a different way than on those who are still living in sin. But He can have an effect on all people. Who else would awaken a human heart alienated from God? Who would work divine repentance and sorrow? Who would work the necessary recognition of sin and bring people under the cross? If the work of the Spirit had been limited to the disciples alone, no other person could have been converted and the church would not exist today.

In sending His Spirit, God thought of all mankind, and it is important that we all take the right attitude towards this Spirit. Every obedience and every submission to the influence of this Spirit will have positive and valuable results.

The special reason for His outpouring, however, is that the church would be filled with this Spirit and experience His power and influence as well as His guidance and protection. May our faithful God grant this today!

*Friedrich Krebs*



# What Took Place at Pentecost?

**T**he Bible's short phrase: "and when the Day of Pentecost had fully come" (Acts 2:1) is one of the most significant passages in Scripture. The word Pentecost means "fiftieth," the fiftieth day after Easter.

It is the day of origin or the inauguration day of the glorious church of Jesus Christ. On this day, the church began to conduct its mission to change the entire world. This account of that Pentecost can be found in Acts 2. When we read this passage, great truths become important to us anew, truths that we still require today.

The seekers of truth at that time found exactly what they needed on that day. We find ourselves in a comparable situation today. People who lived after Christ's resurrection basically had the same needs as believers today. Prior to Pentecost, the followers of Christ were weak. In fact, it seems that there was no one among them who could have persevered in storms of persecution. Fifty days earlier, at the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the disciples had fled and kept themselves hidden. On the third day after Jesus' death, as He lay in the tomb, some women ventured out to perform a final act of love for their Lord. In the midst of this frightening time, the great and unique event of Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead took place. His resurrection brought new strength and new life to the despondent disciples. The Lord spent forty days on this earth, gathering and teaching his disciples, and then He departed from them. He ascended to His Father in heaven.

We are told that the disciples spent the following ten days in prayer. They had already experienced Jesus' power of redemption and had recognized Him as their

Lord. The silent days of prayer were followed by the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out. Every redeemed person who was willing to serve God and work for Him was filled with the Holy Spirit. In this experience, the believers found exactly what they needed for their lives.

If the Lord's followers needed the Holy Spirit at that time, isn't that exactly what we need today? We also need the Holy Spirit to be successful in the work of the Lord. The children of God of all centuries need Him. The entire Bible speaks of people's longing for progress and perfection. Yet God often had to confront them because they wanted to do their work without Him. From the building of the Tower of Babel to Pentecost, there was a long night of misunderstanding, darkness, and rebellion against God. Clarity, unity, and understanding only came when the Holy Spirit was poured out. Indeed, many people gathered at Pentecost, speaking different languages; and yet Luke was able to write of this day: "each one heard them speaking in his own language." People had long yearned for true understanding among themselves so that they could work together for the common purpose of God. However, this only became possible through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

John certainly did not like being called the Son of Thunder. His urgent, domineering, and fierce manner was like fire to other people if they did not immediately bow to his word. Without a doubt, it was John's attitude that prompted his mother to ask for a place of honor in heaven for him. However, "when the day of Pentecost had come," this attitude also changed in him. On that day, John found what he needed and had been longing for.

Prior to Pentecost, we see Peter denying the Lord. In fact, he lied and even swore. Then he went out and wept bitterly and hid himself. Yet when the day of Pentecost came, we find a courageous Peter. His sermon, which is recorded in Acts 2, is clear proof that Peter had also found what he needed at Pentecost.

What would have happened to the disciples if the Holy Spirit had not come? Sure, they were busy, but they accomplished little. Repeatedly, we read of their fear until the day of Pentecost had come.

Peter preached at that time: “For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:39). How foolish it is to think that this experience is only for a few preachers and kingdom workers. It is for everyone! The believers of that time knew many fears, doubts, and dangers. How similar it is to our time today. When we hear the news from all over the world, war, death, loneliness, and worry want to frighten us everywhere. In every way, fear wants to paralyze our strength. However, just as the Holy Spirit became a strength for those of the first century, so it can empower us to be an overcomer in the 21st century.

Only the Holy Spirit can give you love, strength and self-control. Dear Soul, the Holy Spirit can also satisfy your longing in these days. Without the Holy Spirit, the early church would have been a group of people with divided hearts. For this reason, Jesus gave His disciples the promise before His ascension: “you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Anyone who wants to be a witness for God without the power of the Holy Spirit will soon

experience failure. Those who undertake to share the message of the gospel will soon become discouraged if they do not have the Holy Spirit.

The sad thing today is that so many people view the coming of the Holy Spirit as a historical event that affected only those at that Pentecost. However, the Bible clearly states that the same Holy Spirit that the Christians of that time received will also be given to us if we only recognize the need for it. Think about how the first Christians received the Holy Spirit. They prayed earnestly for ten full days. They completely surrendered their lives to God and consecrated themselves to Him. They burnt all bridges to the world behind them. They were serious. That is why “when the day of Pentecost had come,” they were ready to receive the Holy Spirit.

Dear Friend, has your life also been a series of difficulties so far? Perhaps your heart is full of fear and disappointment. Let me tell you: the Holy Spirit will also enter your life if you recognize the need for it. If you yearn for being filled with the Holy Spirit with all your heart and truly walk in the light you have received so far, you too will find full satisfaction in this experience, just as the disciples did. However, the Holy Spirit will never be able to guide you properly if you do not vow complete obedience to God.

Therefore, don't you want to become a happy child of God? Wouldn't you like to successfully witness for God and His church? Don't you long for a fuller spiritual life? Do you need the power of the Holy Spirit? Then prepare yourself to receive it. Open your heart to Him and make a full commitment, then He will also fill you, if you only want Him to.

*H. Riggle*





## Wonderfully Made

Mom picks Laura up from kindergarten at lunch-time today, pushing baby Toby in the stroller. The sun is shining, butterflies are fluttering, bees are buzzing, and birds are singing. Laura is unusually quiet. Mom sees her wiping away a tear and asks gently: “Laura, what’s wrong?”

Laura burst into tears. “I wanted to play with Leonie, but she said: ‘Go away! You’re fat and ugly! I don’t want to play with you!’” Mom takes her in her arms. “Did Leonie really say that? That’s not true at all! God made you beautiful. Maybe Leonie is sad because her parents are separating.”

Laura thinks about this and feels somewhat comforted. Then she says quietly: “But I’m really taller than the other girls . . .” Mom smiles. “Let’s sit on this bench for a moment. I want to tell you a story.”

She begins: “Once upon a time, there was a large, gray animal. Much bigger than the other animals in the jungle. With huge ears, it could fan itself with fresh air. Its long trunk helped it to grab things, squirt water, and make funny noises.

“It was clever and friendly and liked to help others. But the animals often didn’t want to play with him. Some were even scared! That made him sad. He tried to make himself smaller, but no matter how much he ducked, he remained the biggest animal in the jungle.

“One day, he cried in despair. Then God asked: ‘Why are you crying?’

“The animal sobbed: ‘The others don’t like me because I’m too big.’

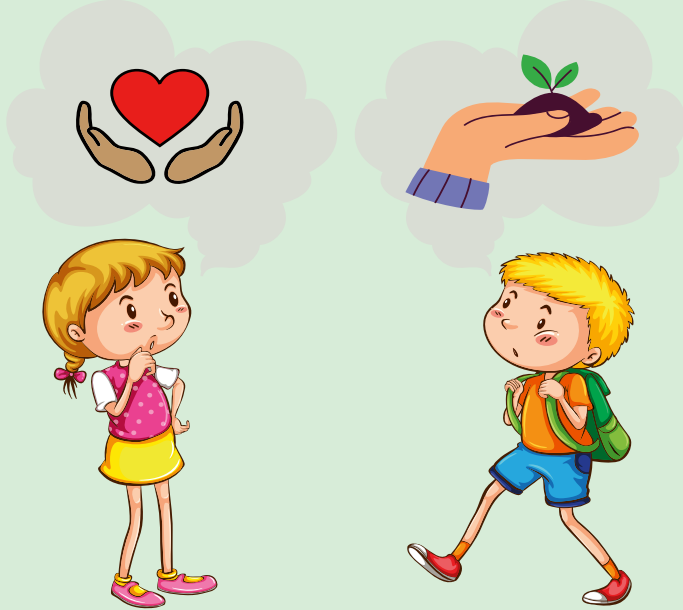
“Then God lovingly said, ‘I made you just as you are, and all my works are good. You are an elephant. If you make yourself small, you are just a bent elephant. But I want you to be happy. Use your strength, your mind, and your heart to help others.’”

Then Mom paused and stroked Laura’s cheek. “You know, I used to be taller than my friends, too. But at some point, I understood: The color of our eyes, our hair, or how tall we are doesn’t matter. Only that we are loving, helpful, and friendly. You are beautiful and so loved just the way God made you.”

*Helene Rotfuss*

## God Knows and Loves You!

**H**ave you ever wondered if someone truly knows and understands you? Someone who knows what



you're thinking even before you say it? Someone who is always with you and looks out for you? This is exactly what David describes in Psalm 139. Why don't you look it up in your Bible and read this beautiful Psalm?

Even before you were born, God planned and formed you with infinite love. He deliberately created every detail—your voice, your face, your laugh, your strengths, and even your little quirks. There is no one else in the world who is exactly like you. You are unique and precious!

You don't have to achieve anything or be perfect to be loved by God. He simply loves you because you are His creation. He loves you so much that

Jesus Christ came to earth to free you from sin—all the iniquity that separates you from God. Never let anyone tell you that you are not good enough just because others seem prettier or smarter.

God is with you always and ev-

erywhere. He never leaves you, no matter where you go or how you feel. Whether you are happy or sad, strong or weak, God sees and understands you. Even when you think no one notices you, He does.

Sometimes we don't understand why things happen. David also had questions, but he said: God's thoughts are "more in number than the sand" of the sea. This means that God's knowledge and wisdom are infinite. We can trust Him because He takes care of each one of us.

At the end of the Psalm, David asks God to look into his heart and examine what is going on there and to guide him on the right path. We, too, can ask God to show us His will for our lives. Always remember:

1. God knows and understands you—you don't have to hide from him.
2. God is always with you, no matter what happens.
3. God made you wonderful—you are valuable and loved!

Maybe you just want to say "thank you" to Him today? For creating you, for being with you, and for being so very important to Him!

*Helene Rotfuss*

"Thank you for  
making me so  
wonderfully complex!"  
(Psalm 139:14 NLT)





# The Grace That Teaches Us

***“For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.”***

(Titus 2: 11–12 NIV)

**T**his passage is both an encouragement and a call to action for believers. It beautifully encapsulates the transformative power of God’s grace and its purpose in the life of a Christian. Let us reflect deeply on the implications of this text and how it guides us to live a life that honors God.

## *The grace that brings salvation*

The opening phrase “the grace of God has appeared” is a profound declaration of God’s unmerited favor made manifest through Jesus Christ. Grace is at the heart of the Gospel, it is the undeserved kindness of God toward humanity, offering salvation not because of our works but because of His love.

When Paul writes that grace brings salvation to all people, he underscores the universal scope of God’s redemptive plan. No one is beyond the reach of this grace, regardless of their past or present. This is a reminder that salvation is a gift, not something earned. It invites us to rest in the assurance that God’s grace is sufficient, cleansing our sins and empowering us to walk in the newness of life.

## *Grace as a teacher*

What sets this passage apart is the depiction of grace as a teacher. Often, grace is thought of solely

as the means by which we are saved, but here, it is described as an active, instructive force in the believer's life.

Grace teaches us to say “no” to ungodliness and worldly passions. This is significant because it highlights the transformative nature of grace. It does not merely forgive us but also empowers us to live differently. To say “no” is not always easy. It requires the strength to resist temptations that draw us away from God. But grace equips us with the ability to discern what is ungodly and to reject it with confidence.

Worldly passions are all around us—materialism, selfish ambition, and the pursuit of pleasure at the expense of righteousness. Grace helps us to see these things for what they truly are: fleeting and ultimately unsatisfying. It teaches us to anchor our hearts in what is eternal rather than being swayed by the temporary pleasures of this world.

### *Living in the present age*

Paul's instruction to live “self-controlled, upright and godly” is particularly relevant in our time. Our present age, much like Paul's, is marked by moral confusion and spiritual apathy. Self-control requires discipline and intentionality, especially when the world around us promotes indulgence and excess. To live uprightly is to act justly and honorably in all areas of life, reflecting God's character in our relationships and responsibilities.

Living a godly life means centering our existence on God's will and purposes. This does not mean withdrawing from the world but engaging with it in a way

that reveals God's love and truth. Grace empowers us to shine as lights in a dark world, showing others the beauty of a life transformed by Christ.

### *Grace in action*

The practical application of Titus 2: 11–12 is both personal and communal. Personally, we are called to examine our hearts and lives, asking where we might need to say “no” to ungodliness and embrace a godly lifestyle. This is a daily process that requires humility, prayer, and dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Communally, the grace of God should shape our interactions with others. Just as we have received grace, we are called to extend it—to forgive, to love, and to encourage others in their journey of faith. Our lives become a testimony to the power of grace, drawing others to the salvation it offers.

In conclusion, Titus 2: 11–12 reminds us that grace is not passive; it is active and transformative. It saves us and teaches us, enabling us to live lives that glorify God. In a world that often pulls us in the opposite direction, this passage calls us to stand firm, rooted in the grace of God.

As we reflect on these verses, let us embrace the dual role of grace in our lives, receiving it with gratitude and allowing it to shape us into people who reflect God's love and holiness. May we live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives, bearing witness to the power of the gospel in this present age.

*Shaira Garcia*

*Philippines*

*(Light of Life: January 2025)*





## 8 Fights Worth Picking with Your Kids

**A** while ago, I came across a post entitled, “8 Fights Worth Picking with Your Kids,” and as far as I can tell, it comes from an individual named David Morris. The article is written from the perspective of parents. I would like to share these “fights” with you, and as we go through them, I want you to consider why these things are so important to parents and why they are constantly encouraging their children and youth in these areas. For children and youth reading this, understanding your parent’s perspective might even help improve your relationship with them. Naturally, we also want to see what Scripture says about these topics.

1) The first fight that the author mentions is the “reading fight.” He says, “Make your kids read. Because reading is tied to everything from cognitive development to the ability to focus.” There are so many benefits that come from reading. Listening to audio books and podcasts can also be good, but there is something special about reading. I find this to be especially true about reading the Bible. At times I listen to my audio Bible, but I’ve noticed that I don’t catch nearly as much as when I read it. To help inspire you to grow in your love for reading God’s word, I would encourage you to read Psalm 119.

2) Second, is the “outside fight.” “Make your kids go outside. The natural world teaches us things. Plus, outside there’s sunshine, fresh air, and exercise waiting for them. Most importantly, nature is full of things in short supply in our world: Discovery, wonder, peace, joy.” When I’m outside, appreciating nature, I find that my soul becomes more focused on God and His

creation. I feel like the Psalmist who writes in Psalm 8:3–4, “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?”

3) Third is the “work fight.” “Make your kids work. . . . There are priceless life principles you can only learn with a mop in your hand.” It’s important that we learn how to work. Proverbs 12:24 says, “The hand of the diligent will rule, but the lazy *man* will be put to forced labor.” We will struggle throughout life if we cultivate a lazy attitude. Not only that, Paul writes in 2 Thessalonians 3:10, “If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.” We should also strive to always do our best when we work. “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men” (Colossians 3:23).

4) Then there’s the “meal fight.” “Make your kids eat as a family. Our lives are a blur of incessant activity. Meals together are a physical pause to recover a truth so easily sacrificed at the altar of busyness.” Eating together provides opportunities for communication and fellowship which strengthens relationships. It’s no wonder that eating together helped the New Testament church to grow (Acts 2:46–47).

5) The “boredom fight” is next. “Make your kids live with boredom. . . . And, odd as it sounds, boredom is a skill.” Boredom can be an amazing asset. Boredom is the mother of innovation and creativity. I think of David. He was a shepherd who had a lot of time on his hands in the fields watching his family’s sheep. What did he do with his free time? He likely played his harp

or wrote music. Roughly half the Psalms that we have in the Bible are attributed to him.

6) The next fight is the “me first fight.” “Make your kids go last. Not every time for everything. But enough to remember that the world doesn’t revolve around them.” Selflessness is a central part of Christianity. Christ put our needs before His own, and we are to do the same for others. Paul writes in Philippians 2:3–4, “Let nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”

7) We then get to the “awkward conversation fight.” “Make your kids have uncomfortable conversations with you. . . . Your kids will roll their eyes and resist. You will stumble and stutter. They need and want your perspective, lessons learned, and wisdom.” Some of the biggest decisions or crossroads of our lives are the ones that we are often too afraid or ashamed to seek advice

about. Parents want to teach their kids about these things. They want to live out Proverbs 22:6 which says, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” However, sometimes parents don’t know where to start. It is a great help to them when their children and youth are transparent with them and seek their help.

8) Finally, there’s the “limitation fight.” “Learning to live within limits is a valuable life skill. In fact, many adult problems arise from an inability to accept them.” All people should have limits. Adults make their own limits, teens and kids need help with this. There is such a thing as too much of a good thing. Proverbs 25:16 says, “Have you found honey? Eat only as much as you need, lest you be filled with it and vomit.” Sometimes we need help knowing when and when not to do something, and sometimes we need others to set limits for us.

David Knelsen  
Hamilton, Ontario

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

June 7-9, 2025  
Pentecost Conference  
in Herford, Germany

June 22, 2025  
100th Anniversary Celebration  
Wetaskiwin, AB

July 18-20, 2025  
50th Anniversary Celebration  
Neustädt, Mexico

July 21-25, 2025  
Bible Course  
Neustädt, Mexico

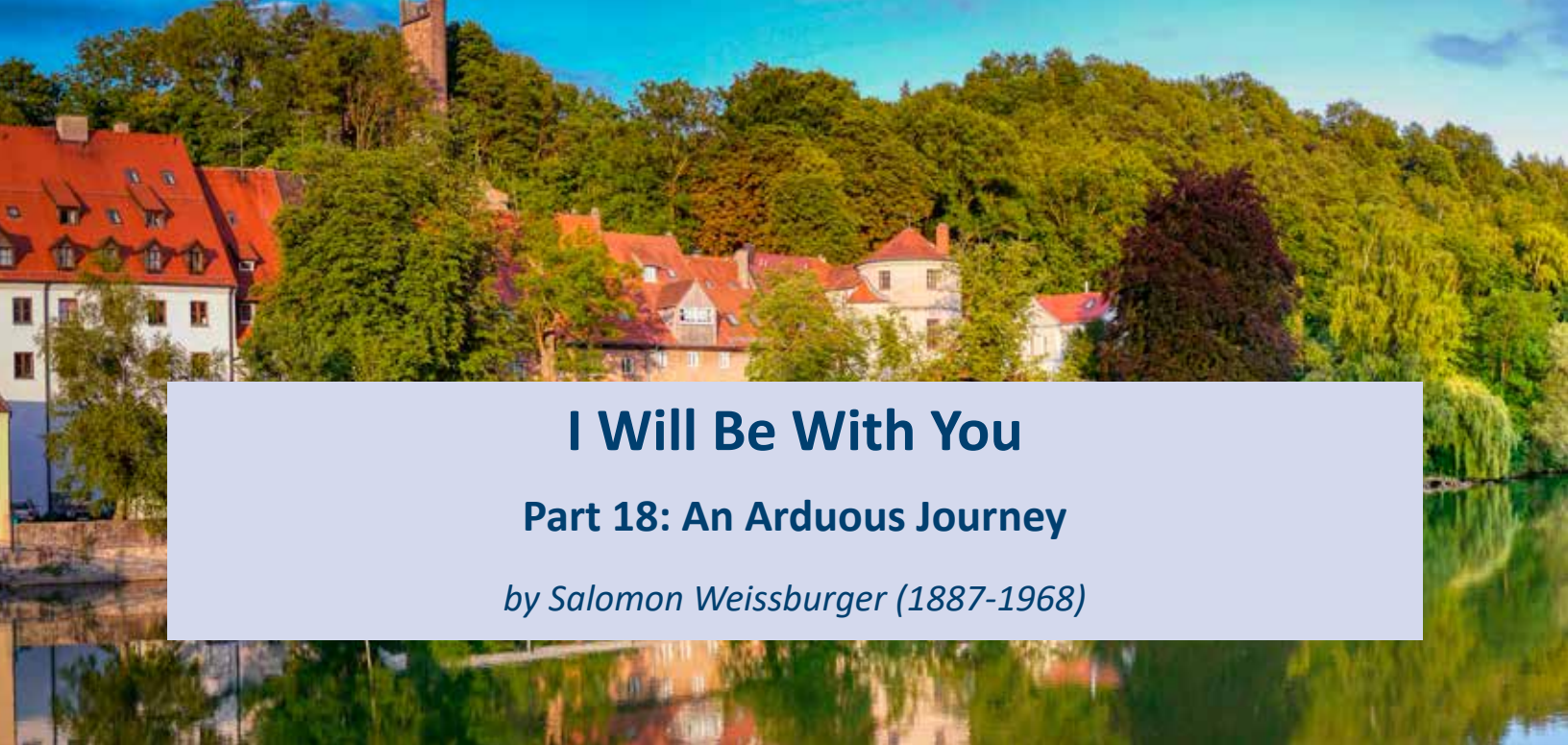
## From the Editorial Team

For more than 15 years, Brother and Sister Nimz have been responsible for the editorial work of the *Foundation of Faith*. God has richly blessed this ministry. Since the beginning of May,

Brother Taron has taken over the task of editor. Brother and Sister Nimz will continue to support this work as much as they can. May God bless them abundantly for their service in His kingdom and continue to give them new strength, grace, and health every day.

We also welcome Brother David Knelsen to the editorial team. He is pastor at the Church of God in Hamilton, Ontario.

Please keep this work in your prayers so that the *Foundation of Faith* can continue to be a guide on the path to heaven for many readers.



# I Will Be With You

## Part 18: An Arduous Journey

*by Salomon Weissburger (1887-1968)*

In 1940, my son Heinrich and his family moved to Rio das Antas to serve the congregation there. Having left behind some of their household goods with us in Nova Esperanca and having extremely limited resources, their new home in Rio das Antas ended up being furnished very primitively. To help them out, I decided to take some of their belongings to them.

However, this was far easier said than done. A major obstacle was that the trip had to be broken up into multiple legs, making it especially awkward to travel with a lot of baggage. In addition, long-distance buses in the modern sense did not yet exist, and only a few short stretches were traversable by vehicle.

The route from Nova Esperanca to Rio das Antas was one we knew well, having traveled it often. On the first day, we would take a horse-drawn carriage 45 kilometers (28 mi) from Nova Esperanca to Hamonia (now Ibirama). The second day started with 80 kilometers (50 mi) by narrow-gauge railway from Hamonia to Blumenau, following which we would transfer to a bus and ride 78 kilometers (48 mi) to Jaraguá, where we would spend the night. On the morning of the third day, another train left from there for Porto Uniao, covering the approximately 300 kilometers (186 mi) by 10:00 or 11:00 in the evening of the same day. The fourth day called for a third train ride, this time from Sao Paulo to Porto Alegre, to travel a distance of somewhere between 110 and 120 kilometers

(68–75 mi) in about seven hours. In total, the journey took four days, for a total distance of about 600 kilometers (373 mi).

There was another option, too, for those of us willing to spend a few days on horseback; our brothers from Rio das Antas often preferred this approach since, in addition to saving money, it allowed them to essentially halve the distance by taking a more direct route.

Knowing all this, I wondered whether I could deliver my children's belongings by horse to avoid loading and unloading everything once or twice a day. However, the roads were in extremely poor condition back then; in fact, they were not so much roads as dirt trails made by settlers and hikers, and they featured some long, lonely, and dangerous stretches. Nonetheless, I decided to risk it, asking the now deceased Brother Gillung, who was no longer young even at that time, to accompany me with his horse-drawn cart. I offered what I could afford in compensation; he agreed, and we set out, expecting the trip to take about seven days.

On the first day, we made it as far as Lontras. On the second day, we reached the edge of the highlands. On the third day, we crossed into the mountains, camping in the wilderness overnight; the area was a hotspot for bandits, so Brother Gillung left a stable lamp burning in the cart all night. The night passed peacefully, and when we arrived in Curitiba on the fourth day,





Brother Gillung left his horses in the pasture overnight. To his horror, he awoke the next morning to see that the nocturnal frost had frozen all the grass, leaving the horses with nothing to eat.

In Curitiba, we had to change our plans as we learned that the ferry we intended to take over the Marombas River, 20 kilometers (12 mi) away, was out of order. This made it pointless to continue with the cart, so Brother Gillung parted ways with me in Curitiba, returning to Nova Esperanca alone. For my part, I took a bus up to the river's edge, where I hired a dugout canoe to ferry me and my baggage across the river. The boat was so narrow that I had to balance the boxes on the canoe's gunwales instead of putting them by my feet. Fortunately, the river crossing went well, and once on the other side, I was able to take a bus to Caçador. On the sixth day, I finally arrived at our children's place in Rio das Antas.

It had been an arduous journey and one not free of danger, as Rio das Antas had its own problems with bandits and horse thieves, with the latter targeting our settlers with some frequency. Nonetheless, I made it through unmolested, and I still thank God today for His gracious protection and assistance on this journey.

This is one example of what missionary service in Brazil meant at a practical level. My wife and I made many such journeys and experienced a lot of hardship, but we did it for our Lord and Savior, gladly taking such things upon us for Jesus's sake.

This journey would look very different today. Brazil has undergone a transformation, and travel is much faster and more comfortable. We can thank God that the people who came later were able to take advantage of this change. When we arrived, great sacrifices were required, but we did it all for the Lord. Others who served God with us at the time made similar sacrifices. God will give us all our due.

Back in Germany, before emigrating to Brazil, we had already applied for a visa to enter Argentina. This made it possible to visit the Radke family near the city of Leandro N. Alem, Argentina, in early 1937. The rainy season made it difficult to hold larger meetings, so Brother Adolf Weidmann and I traveled to Crespo in the province of Entre Rios, where we stayed with the Günter family. The Günters had moved to Argentina from Russia's Volga region, where they had come to the faith and become acquainted with two of our preachers: Brother Doebert and Brother Ebel.

The Günters were alone in Argentina for many years, living according to the knowledge God had given them. After some time, they got in contact with sisters and brothers of the Church of God, through whom they invited preachers to visit. Before long, a congregation had formed in Crespo, with Brother Günter serving as its pastor. From what I remember, we spent four weeks in Crespo and the surrounding area on that visit, during which time we held services there as well. ■

# A Father's Letter

## Let your child see a true Christian father!

I am the father of a precious seven-year-old boy. I have tried my best to provide for my family. The years came and went, and I thought, "I'm really doing well." So, I was even more surprised when I suddenly realized I had made a terrible mistake all along—I had not truly fulfilled my role as a father.

I want to share something that is obvious and sincere. But more than that, it brought about the greatest change in my heart and my life. And it's a major concern of mine which I need to share with you, in the hope that you, too, might experience the same transformation—to become a "real father."

My name? Well, that doesn't matter. I've been working in a large factory in our city for nine years. Every afternoon, around 2:15, I leave home, walk down the long hill to the corner, turn right, and soon after, I reach the place where I regularly have a drink. Please believe me—I only ever had "one" drink, or possibly, perhaps, two. But never more than that. I accepted the social norm, "It helps life go better." That was the extent of my reflection—it wasn't a big deal.

Well, that afternoon, the one I want to tell you about, started as usual. The day before, it had snowed heavily. And when I opened the door, there were heavy, white snow drifts. I was already halfway down the hill when I heard my son calling me. I quickly turned around and saw him in the snow, trying to step in the footprints I had left behind. He looked so cute, trying so hard, that I laughed out loud. When he reached me, he stretched out his hands and said, "Help me, Daddy! I'm following in your footsteps!"

I don't know why it was, but those words hit me like a bolt of lightning. At the same time, I saw myself just a few steps ahead, about to round the corner to go for a drink. My heart became sad and ashamed.

My little boy had no idea. But from that moment on, he never would. I said right then—and the words applied to me as well—"No, my son, no! You are not allowed to follow me!" And since that time, I never went drinking again.

During our lunch break, I told a few guys about it as we sat together. I was even a little proud of myself. And I could tell they noticed it, too.

It was time to get back to work when one of them approached me. He was a decent, regular fellow, who never mingled much with the others. He said something I will never forget. In fact, what he said caused me to contemplate and eventually led to the great change I've experienced. Let me repeat—to all fathers—what he said:

"Friend, you were wrong, totally wrong. You wanted to show your son just one part of yourself as an example, something he could learn from you. And it was the less meaningful part. You showed him what *not* to do. But that's not enough for your boy—and not enough for you either, in view of the Almighty God. In a way, you were only half a father to him. Your boy needs much more from you—the other half as an example, the far more important part. You must show him what he *should* do—how to do what's right. And that only comes when one accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and becomes a new creation. You won't be a true father unless you do that. That's the important example—because being saved is the most important thing, both for this world and for the world to come! Let your child see a true Christian father."

That was a light-bulb moment for me. And today I know it was given by the Lord—the Lord who is now my personal Savior. Now I am a "genuine father." I have come to Jesus with sincere repentance and made the decision to follow Him. Jesus has become my personal Savior. I don't just talk about something—I am the "something" I want to show my boy. And I'm so happy to say that he already trusts the Lord as best he understands.

Fathers, please accept this letter from my heart to yours. I mean the entire letter—every word. I know the Lord waits with His love, with all His grace and mercy from Golgotha, "Therefore, . . . fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest" (Hebrews 3:1 NIV). ■

## Needing Father

**I**t is hard to estimate the need a human being has for a father. Possibly, this need comes from an inherent need for God, but it is more than that. From a human perspective, a healthy relationship with one's father is of utmost importance. Yet, in our present society, more and more children are subjected to the tragedy of growing up without a father.

One of the most heartwarming cries of a young man resonates from the lips of the Prodigal Son, who, when he had turned from his father and completely destroyed his life, cried out, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants'" (Luke 15: 18–19). He was in desperate need of his father!

Many such young (and older) men spend their lives striving for the approval of their father. Either their biological fathers have neglected them in enjoying their own pursuits, or overachieving fathers have set a standard too high for their sons to attain. Many of the rebellious acts of young men and women were desperate cries for the attention of their father. Others were scarred for life because they never heard a word of approval or affection from their fathers. What a tragic failure of fathers to recognize and supply the need of their children!

Through every phase of life, a father is of inestimable value. For a small child, Daddy is a hero! For a teen, Dad offers stability as often hormones rage, and

the young person seeks to find his or her place in life. And yes, the enemy of our soul, Satan, tries his best to turn teens against their father . . . and their heavenly Father! Even for adults, Dad is a source of encouragement and stability in the turmoil of constant change.

Fathers, let's ask God to help us see the critical need of being a good father in the lives of

our children. We want to bless them with the blessing of the Lord. We want to model the heart of our heavenly Father, God, to our children. We need to show our children love, affection, approval, and pleasure. Let's stand behind them with support, where needed with loving correction, and integrity. Ask God to make you a father after His own heart!

When your children, young or old, need Dad, covenant before God that they will find you there!

That prodigal son in Luke 15? "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put *it* on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on *his* feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill *it*, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry" (Luke 15: 20–24).

Ron Taron  
Steinbach, Manitoba





# *What We Need*

Folding hands in prayer to God, our Savior,  
Hands that plead for his unfailing favor,  
We need loving hands that intercede.  
Faithful hands held up in intercession  
Without doubt, and without fear, with passion,  
Without hate, those loving hands will plead.

Working hands that strive, and won't grow weary;  
Faithful hands that toil and still are cheery.  
We need active hands that work and pray;  
Hands that persist and wipe away the tears,  
Helping the sick, relieving pain and fears.  
There is so much to do every day.

Sacrificial hands, that willingly give,  
Gifts, time, and mercy as long as we live.  
Active hands, that are there for the Lord.  
Firm hands, protecting others from the grave,  
Leading sinners to Jesus, who can save;  
Loving, helping, trusting in the Word.

Victorious hands, fighting for the Lord,  
Using Scripture, the Bible is our sword;  
Standing for the truth, yes, come what may:  
"Lord, keep us faithful and true to the end;  
Strengthen the hands of your servants and friends.  
Help us in battle, now and always."