

Small Group Guide

Based on "The Holy Spirit and the Advancement of God's Kingdom"

A Sermon by Bob Santos

Overview

This sermon explores the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the nature of God's kingdom, and how ordinary believers are called and empowered to advance that kingdom in the world. Drawing from Romans 8:11, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Gospels, Bob Santos traces a progression from Jesus to the twelve disciples to the seventy to the 120 at Pentecost, showing that God has always intended to use all of his people, not just a spiritual elite, to carry out his purposes on earth.

Key Takeaways

1. The gospel is not merely a transaction that secures a future place in heaven. It is an invitation to participate in the advancing kingdom of God, which begins now and carries a call to surrender to the king.
2. The kingdom of God is spiritual in nature. Physical acts of service and generosity are vital, but without prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit, they fall short of kingdom impact.
3. God has consistently chosen ordinary, flawed people to accomplish his purposes, so that no one can take credit for what he alone makes possible.
4. Because of the blood of Jesus, the barrier between God and humanity has been permanently removed. Every believer now has access to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.
5. There is a distinction between the Holy Spirit dwelling within a believer at the new birth and the empowering of the Holy Spirit for witness and ministry. Both are available to every believer.

6. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is not a one-time event. It is an ongoing, persistent pursuit that requires surrender, faith, and continued seeking.
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Discussion Questions

Opening

1. Bob Santos opened with a story about a Bible verse that stayed with him for months, comparing it to food stuck between your teeth. Has a particular verse or passage of Scripture ever lingered with you in that way? Which one, and why do you think it stayed with you?
 2. How would you describe the kingdom of God to someone who had never heard the term? Where did your understanding of it come from?
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The Kingdom of God

3. Bob Santos drew a distinction between a gospel message focused primarily on going to heaven someday and a gospel message centered on the coming kingdom of God. He said the kingdom message "puts a demand on us." What do you think he meant by that? How does that distinction affect the way you think about your own faith?
 4. He said that throughout history, people have tried to advance God's kingdom through political or governmental means, but that the kingdom is spiritual in nature and requires a spiritual dynamic. Do you agree with that assessment? Where do you see that tension playing out today?
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The Holy Spirit and Access to God

5. Bob Santos described the layout of the Jewish temple in detail, from the Court of the Gentiles to the Holy of Holies, to illustrate how exclusive access to God's presence once was. Romans 8:11 describes the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead as now dwelling within believers. What does it mean to you personally that this kind of access is now available to every believer?

6. He said that without the blood of Jesus, coming into the unfiltered presence of God would be overwhelming and destructive for sinful humanity. How does understanding what the blood of Jesus actually accomplished change the way you approach prayer, worship, or simply your daily walk with God?
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Ordinary People, Extraordinary Purpose

7. Bob Santos pointed out that we know virtually nothing about the seventy people Jesus sent out in Luke 10. He said we tend to confer sainthood on spiritual heroes because it lets us off the hook from expecting God to work through us. Do you find yourself doing that? What does it feel like to consider that God might want to work through you in a similar way?
 8. He quoted 1 Corinthians 1:26-29, where Paul says God deliberately chooses the weak, the foolish, and the despised so that no one can boast. Has there been a time in your life when God used you in a way that clearly exceeded your own ability or preparation? What was that like?
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Being Filled with the Holy Spirit

9. Bob Santos used two illustrations to describe the difference between being indwelt by the Spirit and being baptized or filled with the Spirit. The first was a wishing well that requires effort to draw water up, versus an artesian spring where water flows freely from within. The second was the difference between blanching vegetables and pickling them. Which illustration resonates more with you, and why?
 10. He said he genuinely does not understand why God fills some people quickly and others only after long periods of persistent seeking. Have you experienced that kind of waiting in your own life? How did you respond to it, and what did you learn?
 11. He warned against the comparison trap, where believers feel like second-class Christians because they have not received a particular gift or experience that others seem to have. Have you ever felt that way? How do you think a group like this one can guard against that kind of discouragement?
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Practical Application

12. Bob Santos closed with three keys: seek to be filled initially and continually, repent and yield fully to God's will, and believe that you are deeply loved and that God will fill you. Which of these three feels most challenging for you right now, and why?
 13. He encouraged people not to stop at the altar but to go home, open their Bible, set aside a meal, and cry out to God. What does persistent, intentional seeking look like in your current season of life? What practical steps could you take this week?
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Practical Applications for the Week

- Set aside a specific block of time this week, even thirty minutes, to do nothing but pray and wait on God. Bring no agenda other than asking to be filled and yielded.
 - Read Acts chapters 1 and 2 in one sitting. As you read, pay attention to the progression from Jesus to the twelve to the 120 to the thousands. Ask God what your place is in that continuing progression.
 - Identify one area of your life where you have been relying primarily on your own natural ability or effort rather than the power of the Holy Spirit. Bring that area before God in prayer this week.
 - If you have been comparing your spiritual experience to someone else's and have felt discouraged as a result, write down what you know to be true about how God sees you. Ask him to replace comparison with confidence in his love for you specifically.
 - Consider sharing with a trusted friend or group member one way you sense God calling you to advance his kingdom in your everyday life, whether at work, in your neighborhood, or in your family.
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Closing Prayer Suggestion

Close your group time by praying together in the spirit of the prayer Bob Santos offered at the beginning of the sermon, asking God to open and enlighten your vision, to help you see the way he sees, to help you see him the way he sees himself, and to help you see yourselves the way he sees you. Invite the Holy Spirit to fill each person present and to empower your group to be witnesses of his kingdom in the places he has placed you.