

# FOCUS ON FAITH

## WE'RE NOT ALL THE SAME!

"Thank God!" I hear you say and yes we do need to thank Him that each of us is unique. The God who made every blade of grass and every snowflake different has thankfully made people – the greatest of His creations – infinitely different.

Over the past few weeks I've taken several personality tests designed to help me understand more about myself and how I relate to people in different scenarios. It's been a very useful and revealing exercise to understand more about how my unique personality acts, reacts and interacts with others. Writer John Ortberg perceptibly entitles his new book, *"Everybody's normal until you get to know them"* but often the person we fail to understand most is ourselves.

The Bible tells us in Genesis that God made us *"in His own image"*. Now it's obvious that doesn't mean physical image because just by using our eyes we can see that we're all different. It must mean that we are similar to God in our ability to understand, reason, act and respond and that we have a spiritual capability hardwired into our make-up and personality.

Dictionaries variously define *"image"* as a *"duplicate"* or *"likeness"*, an *"illustration"* or *"representative reproduction of an original"*. Just think of the millions of pounds companies spend cultivating their image to make them stand out from their competitors. And what about the money we spend on clothes, cosmetics, health and fitness and dietary regimes to make the most of the image we have?

The great thing about the God Christians believe in though is that He has chosen to have a personal, individual, unique relationship with us – we don't all have to worship Him in the same way.

**The Holy Spirit transformed a bunch of fearful, disillusioned men and women into courageous communicators**

Dixons, Currys, The Link and PC World sell similar products and operate in the same marketplace and on the same High Streets. You could say they were in competition with each other but they're owned by the same ultimate holding company. Similarly, Christian churches in the Bridgnorth area have different methods of expressing their faith – worship styles, liturgy, activities and even

some (but not all) areas of doctrinal understanding. They appeal to different types of people because we are not all the same and we need the variety that's on offer. We're not in competition with each other but we proclaim the message of salvation differently because we appeal to different "consumers".

This Sunday the churches are celebrating Pentecost – traditionally the Church's birthday – when over 3,000 people from different races and cultures became Christians on one day. We also celebrate the fulfilment of Jesus' last promised gift to us – the presence of the Holy Spirit living within us. The power of the Holy Spirit has been described as *"the most powerful force in the universe"*. The Holy Spirit transformed a bunch of fearful, disillusioned men and women into courageous communicators of a message that changed their and their hearers' lives forever. Instead of hiding away in an upper room, they became willing to endure persecution, imprisonment, hardship and even death as they testified to the power of Jesus' resurrection life that now filled them.

The Bible says that on that first Pentecost after Jesus' death and resurrection there were people from *"every nation under heaven"* in Jerusalem yet they heard the disciples explaining God's plan of salvation in their own language. God spoke to them individually and uniquely so they could understand.

The Christian churches in the Bridgnorth area may have different *"brand identities and images"* and speak in *"different languages"* but we proclaim a God who loved us enough to send His Son Jesus to die for us and gave us His Holy Spirit to live in us and through us. Not all churches are the same because we need to hear and worship God in our own unique way.

Why not find out more this Sunday at a church near you?

If you'd like to find out more about the real, radical Christian faith, log on to [www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk](http://www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk) which has details of local Christian Churches and contact details.



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