

Eric Liddell talk

We could have said so much about tonight's famous person!

We could have mentioned what an amazing athlete Eric Liddell was, because he wasn't just an Olympic runner. Oh no! He was also a very talented rugby player who played both for Edinburgh and for Scotland!

We could have talked about what an amazing Christian Eric was. For example, did you know that in the 1924 Paris Olympics, he decided not to run in the 400 meters – his strongest race – because the race was being held on a Sunday. You see, for Liddell, keeping Sunday special – keeping Sunday set aside for God – was more important than winning a race. His Christian faith, his relationship with God, was more important than anything else, including the Olympics!

Or we could have talked about his life as a missionary in China, how he was imprisoned by the invading Japanese army, and how he had turned down an opportunity to leave the prison camp (as part of a prisoner exchange program), preferring instead to give his place to a pregnant woman.

But although we haven't really got time to do Eric Liddell's life justice, I do want to quickly mention one other thing about Eric.

As we know, Eric was a Christian, and such he believed, like we do here in Ignite, that God gives us gifts.

When we become a Christian and start following Jesus – God enhances an existing ability, or he gives us a brand-new special ability. And this special ability, this gift, enables us to bless other people, to bless the Church, or to glorify God.

Some gifts are really practical, such as hospitality, fixing things, being good at paperwork, cooking, that kind of stuff. And some gifts are what we call spiritual – like being able to preach or being an amazing pray-er. Or being someone, who God works the miracle of healing through.

And we could go on, because there's loads more gifts!

So, what do we think were Eric's gifts?

Well, we've already heard that he had the gift of compassion – just look at the story of the pregnant woman! And he was a gifted evangelist – he was able to really grab people's attention when he talked about Jesus.

He was also humble – people often commented on the fact that he never looked for glory for himself. He just quietly went about his life – whether as a missionary or a sportsman – always deflecting glory away from himself, always pointing the way to Jesus.

But there was one more gift that Eric knew God has given him! And it's an unusual one! Can you guess what it is?

(Pause)

He was a stonkingly fast runner!

In Eric's own words, he said that *“God made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure.”*

For Eric, being a fast runner was absolutely a gift from God, because through running and winning, he felt God's presence, and it gave him a chance to talk

about who had given him the special ability to be such a brilliant athlete. Eric knew that God was in his life, and he knew that God had made him fast!

So that's Eric Liddell; a guy who was really gifted by God. He was an amazing Christian and missionary, a great evangelist, a compassionate and caring human being, and a flipping fast runner!