

INTIMACY WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Develop an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit and let your life take on new meaning and purpose.

BY REV. DR. A.R. BERNARD

“**T**he church then had peace throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and it became stronger as the believers lived in the fear of the Lord. And with the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, it also grew in numbers.” (Acts 9:31, NLT)

The above took place after the conversion of the apostle Paul. Before Christ came into his life, Paul had a passion to kill Christians and to burn churches. Then Jesus Christ took hold of him on the road to Damascus. And through the transformation of that one man, a season of peace was brought to the churches.

As a result of these two ingredients—the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit—the church became stronger and multiplied in numbers. The daily lives of these church members, including their choices, relationships, speech and thoughts, were lived in constant consciousness of that godly fear and reverence. They also lived in consciousness of their relationship with the Holy Spirit.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

On the day of Pentecost, Peter said, “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 2:16-17). That event gave birth to the church. That very same event introduced us to a season in which the Holy Spirit is the Administrator of the things of God.

Jesus called the Holy Spirit the Lord of the harvest. So the saving of souls, the redemptive work of God, and the transformation of individual hearts that we witness as we go out and engage the world without compromising our values and convictions, are the results of that ministry of the Holy Spirit. Now, is this any different from the methodology that was used in the ministry of Jesus? No, because if we look in Luke 4:18-19, Jesus proclaimed, “The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the

blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.”

This happened after Jesus was baptized and led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness, where He was brought under certain specific tests that were critical for leadership. He returned in the power of the Holy Spirit and shortly after, announced that the Holy Spirit was upon Him. Therefore, the success and effectiveness of His three and a half years of earthly ministry was based on the anointing of the Spirit.

And what was true for the success of the ministry of Jesus is true for the success of any ministry today. The Holy Spirit comes and He anoints the leadership. That ministry begins to move under His power, encouragement, comfort and guidance.

As Christians, we have the mantle to go into the world—the social order, including the worlds of education, finance, government, economics, arts and entertainment. Once we accept that responsibility to go, we must understand that we cannot expect to be successful

apart from the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It is also important that we give Him as many tools as possible to work with. That includes going to school to get educated and seizing opportunities to move up in life so that we are in places of influence. All these, coupled with the anointing of the Holy Spirit, will ensure success in whatever we do.

ILLUMINATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

During His earthly ministry, Jesus said many things to His disciples.





The heart of our faith is in our relationship with a Person.

However, they understood very little of what He said. As recorded in the gospels, the disciples would pull Him aside after He spoke publicly and would ask questions such as: “Can you explain to us the parable of the sower?” And Jesus would say, “You don’t understand the parable of the sower? If you don’t understand this, how will you understand all of the other parables?” The disciples did not understand the nature of the kingdom. They didn’t understand the terms with it when He told them that He would be persecuted and that the religious leaders and business leaders would plot together to kill him and He

would rise again on the third day.

Right up to His death, after His resurrection and before His ascension, they still didn’t fully understand the mission of Jesus and were not equipped to represent Him as carriers of His message.

For three and a half years, Jesus’ twelve disciples spent many days with this Man that they were puzzled about. They saw Him do the incredible. Just one word from Jesus, and all of a sudden, the arm that was not there appeared on the human body, the eyes of a man who was born blind were now opened. They saw Him at the tomb of Lazarus who

had died three days ago, and after Jesus commanded, “Lazarus, come forth!” the dead man came walking out of the grave. They saw how Jesus exercised authority over demons. They saw that even the winds and the waves obeyed Him. They saw how He was miraculously able to feed 5,000 men (not counting the women and children) with the simple lunch of a little boy.

They saw Him express joy, sorrow, grief and anger. They ate together with Him, experienced His providence by a miracle catch of fish after they obeyed His instruction to “launch out into the deep.” They were so deeply impacted by what they saw. The apostle John summed up his experience of following Jesus when he said, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life ...” (1 John 1).

For three and a half years, Jesus was tangible to these men. They could run to Him, touch Him, interact with Him and ask Him countless questions. Then came a point in time when Jesus had to depart from them. He told them, “I must go so that the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, can come.” He said, “Even though I’m leaving you, I will not leave you orphans. In fact, I am going to send Someone who is going to be to you everything that I have been to you for the past three and a half years.”

“The problem is, you won’t be able to see or touch Him. You won’t see Him breathe, you won’t see Him weep. But He will be to you exactly what I’ve been to you. He will guide, protect and provide for you. He will bring to remembrance the things that I’ve said to you, so don’t be afraid.”

Now, here is the problem. How are they going to make the transition from a physical, tangible relationship to one with a Person they could not see? After Jesus’ resurrection, in Acts 1:6, when they had come together, they even asked Him, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” They still did not understand the nature of

the kingdom. He rose from the dead, He showed proof of His resurrection, He talked and interacted with them after the resurrection, but the question of the natural kingdom was still on their minds. Even after Jesus had interacted with the Gentiles and said that they too would be partakers of His message, the disciples still asked if He was going to restore the kingdom to Israel.

Before the coming of the Holy Spirit, not one of the disciples had the mental or moral condition or capacity to represent Jesus in any way. Because

power. When the Holy Spirit has come upon us, we become so transformed that we represent power, the power of God’s kingdom. We represent the authority of Jesus.

BEING COMPELLING WITNESSES

In Acts 2, after the Holy Spirit came upon Peter, he got up to preach a message, quoting out of the Old Testament, unfolding truths and clearly articulating things that he had never understood before. Mind you, he had

Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (v. 18-19).

But the problem here is that Peter still did not understand what was told to him. He might have thought that Jesus was puffing him up. “Then He (Jesus) sternly warned the disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Messiah” (Matt. 16:20, NLT). It wasn’t just a casual

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to ask that question—“Will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”—simply meant they were stuck in their old Jewish mindset and they missed what Jesus was saying.

Jesus was full of grace in his reply to them in Acts 1:7 and 8, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But wait in Jerusalem, because when the Holy Spirit comes, you will receive power to be witnesses.” A witness is someone who is put on the stand to be examined and cross examined. This individual’s story would be so compelling and powerful that the jury would allow itself to be influenced by it and base its conclusion on it.

When the Holy Spirit comes, He so changes the individual that, all of a sudden, what is not understood before, what could not be seen before, would now be so clearly seen and understood.

When you go out into the world and influence culture, you do not go because you have power; you go because you ARE power. When the police arrive at a crime scene, you would say, “The authorities have arrived.” What you are really saying is that power has just pulled up in their car. This is because you recognize them, not as having power, but representing

not gone to a theological seminary between Verses 6 to 8! Somehow, supernaturally, with the coming of the Holy Spirit, everything that he had heard before started to make sense, like a puzzle coming together.

Now, let us rewind to the part of the Bible in which Peter confessed Jesus as Christ. “When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, ‘Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?’ So they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God’” (Matt. 16:13-16).

With that, Jesus got excited, just like how a teacher would feel when his student finally catches on to something after learning for a whole semester. “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven’” (v. 17).

And Jesus in turn told Peter who he was meant to be. “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of

He looked at them and said, “Do not tell anyone what you just heard.” He firmly put a prohibition on their ability, or even attempt, to represent His Messiah-ship.

Why would Jesus do that? Was it for political reasons? Was He concerned that if the word got out and His disciples were saying He was the Messiah, the authorities would arrest Him? No! That was going to happen anyway.

Peter’s confession of Jesus as the Christ took place in Matthew 16, and six days later, in chapter 17, Jesus took Peter, James and John up the mount. It was just the three of them because only they could handle what was about to happen. Up on the mountain, they saw His clothes become white like light, and they saw the glory appear around Him. They were awestruck. All of a sudden, they saw Moses and Elijah, two icons of Jewish history and culture. With Moses representing the law and Elijah representing the prophets, they spoke to Jesus, Who represents the gospel. With this, the gospel message is now testified by the law and the prophets.

How did Peter respond? “Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one

for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah” (Matt. 17:4). There is a reason why God cannot reveal certain things to us humans. Our reactions can be in total error because we do not know how to handle that level of information. Here on the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter actually suggested they worship all three of these individuals!

The Bible then tells us, “While he (Peter) was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!’ And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, ‘Arise, and do not be afraid.’ When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only” (v. 5-8).

Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus again warned them, “Listen, don’t tell anyone what you just saw until after My resurrection” (v. 9). Jesus placed a prohibition on them to represent Him or His claims, of which many were astounding. He claimed to be the Bread of Life. He claimed to be the Way, the Truth and the Life. He claimed that no one can get to the Father but through Him. He claimed to be the very incarnation of God Himself. He told the woman at the well He is the Messiah.

Jesus made some incredible claims about Himself, but He prohibited His disciples from telling anyone. This is because if they tried to do so, in their present mental and moral condition, they would have misrepresented Jesus.

Even when Jesus came across an individual who was demon-possessed and the demons cried out, “Oh! What have we to do with You, Jesus? We know You’re the Holy One of God. Have You come to torment us before our time?” Jesus silenced them. He did not want any mention of His Messiah-ship. Without the Holy Spirit, none of us can accurately represent Jesus.

Jesus said, “When the Comforter comes, He will bring all things to your

remembrance.” This means that without the Holy Spirit, the disciples could not recall the exact words of Jesus to give us the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These men had to be able to recall the details with accuracy, infallibility and truthfulness that we now read and may take for granted. Today, 2000 years later, the gospels still stand the test of time.

In Acts 1, after Jesus told the disciples that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them, He was taken up and a cloud received Him out of their sight. The reality that Jesus was leaving struck them. For days, all they could do was to sit in the upper room and trust that what He said was going to happen. They had no idea how the Holy Spirit was going to come. They did not know what He was going to look or sound like. All they knew was that they were to wait. Whatever happened on the Day of Pentecost had to be so powerful, tangible and spectacular to transform these men into compelling witnesses about Jesus. They had to tell people that this Man whom everybody believed was dead is now alive! They had to testify that Someone is alive, but with no body to show for it!

So there they were, and all of a sudden, the room started to rumble and they found themselves caught up in a whirlwind. They saw tongues of fire landing on individuals’ heads. They then saw and heard these individuals so transformed that they stood up and began to speak in different tongues with clear articulation and power. It was so dramatic that 3,000 people believed that same day. And till today, this message about the resurrection of Jesus has remained a living, life-giving message for all who believe.

When you go into the worlds of business, education, or other sectors of society, you may hold a high academic qualification or be very articulate, but what will change the people you engage with is your conviction that Jesus, who is supposedly dead for 2000 years, is very much alive!

And He has such an impact on your life that when you share about Him, the same power that has arrested you is going to grip them.

We are telling people that when they become Christians, they don’t have a relationship with a religious system; instead they have a relationship with a Person. It is not just some way of life, or a set of rules and laws. It is about a Person who opens your eyes with understanding, who has empowered you with His wisdom, knowledge and

Spirit. He is a Person who enters culture with you. You don’t engage culture alone.

This faith in Jesus sets us apart. Either He being alive is real, or we are crazy. If we don’t understand this, we’ll get caught up in religion and principles. We need principles as our guide and we recognize that the whole universe is one of law and order. But the heart of our faith does not lie in our ability to go to the Bible and extract principles to live by. The heart of our faith is in our relationship with a Person. Jesus is the main character!

When we go into culture, we are representing a Person. We are not representing ourselves, nor are we offering a system of success. Success is the by-product. You cannot help

but become successful when you hang out with a successful Person like Jesus. You cannot change the world without the power of the Holy Spirit. Once we understand it is Jesus who connects those representing Him to the power of His message, and we have a relationship with the Holy Spirit, who is the Administrator of this particular dispensation, many problems in our lives will be solved!

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