

The Holy Spirit's Abundant Treasure: A priceless visit with Pastor Jack, on who the Holy Spirit is

This article was carefully adapted from Hayford's 2009 book, Rebuilding the Real You: The Definitive Guide to the Holy Spirit's Work in Your Life (Charisma House), and Stephen Strang's forthcoming new book, Spirit-Led Living in an Upside-Down World.

The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—is somewhat of a mystery to most people. Referred to for centuries as the Holy Ghost, a dimension of unreality, if not spookiness, has surrounded His person for a long time.

When a person comes to God the Father and willingly receives the gift of life through Jesus the Son, the first thing that happens is that the Holy Spirit enters that person's life. Jesus described Him as a "Comforter"—One who will remain beside you to help, to counsel, to teach and to strengthen you. His entering is only a beginning, though, and the sensible believer in the Lord Jesus will keep open to the Holy Spirit's increasing desire to expand the evidence of God's purposes in his or her life.

Life Abundantly

The fullness of the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Holy Spirit and most of all, the abundant, flowing love of the Holy Spirit are all expressions of God's intent in giving us His Spirit. In other words, to simply realize that the Holy Spirit entered when I received Christ is to grasp a precious truth. But I need to see more—to want

more. The practical development of God's work in my life requires that I give a growing place to the Holy Spirit's working within me.

The Comforter has come, and His mission is to help us to move forward as growing sons and daughters of the Most High God.

If you haven't yet done it, allow the Lord to open in you a conduit of His Holy Spirit, an ever-flowing stream of living water. This fulfills His promise, which is to you personally as much as it is to every other believer in the body of Christ: "You shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

Jesus wants you to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Here is a miracle resource of power, flowing from an unending source. "Spirit-fullness" can strengthen you when you're under attack, provide refreshment through daily prayer and praise, and release a flow of Christ's ministering, healing power in you and through you to others.

Ask Jesus to fill you with the Holy Spirit. With praise in your heart and on your lips, come into His presence, and, by faith, receive His promise because "the promise is to you" (Acts 2:39). Expect His miraculous touch upon you as He answers your invitation.

Continue daily in a fresh walk in Holy Spirit-fullness. Ephesians 5:18 literally reads, "[Keep on being] filled with the Spirit." You cannot be sustained by drinking only once. But having been satisfied initially, keep coming daily to King Jesus's pool, the Holy Spirit's never-ending fountain of living water.

Building with Spirit Fire

Having begun this life by the power of the Holy Spirit, how shall we grow in this new life? The answer is rather obvious: by the power of the same Spirit! But most of us are slow to

understand this fact.

Paul asked the Galatians, “After starting your Christian lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort?” (Gal. 3:3, NLT). We all need the same reminder: New birth isn’t the end of God’s program for us. His Spirit has started something by His power that He wants to advance with our partnership.

Now, everything I have said up to now is probably easy enough for you to acknowledge. Any honest believer will be quick to say, “I need to grow,” or “I want to grow.” But the pathway to growth is usually cluttered with obstacles, and the obstacles are usually hangovers from our past—past lifestyle, past habits, past attitudes, past sinning. We will not “grow out of” such things naturally. It’s the partnership with the Holy Spirit that is all-important to our spiritual and emotional growth.

In other words, the results of our past all too often remain part of our present reality. The fact that you sinned in the past can be seen in its remaining fruit. Of course, you can be certain that God has forgiven it all: this is a bright truth of your new God-given inheritance! But of equal certainty is the continuing presence of many personal problems bequeathed to you from your past. Your salvation solves the problem of your relationship with God, but it doesn’t always dissolve the problems in your life. It opens the doorway to solutions, but it is only by walking through that door and patiently pursuing that way that those problems will finally be resolved.

If patience during God’s “waiting periods” is trying for even the most mature believer, how much more so is it for those of us still discovering that our receiving of the Holy Spirit rarely includes an immediate change of circumstance?

Resting in His Perfect Timing

Over the years I have had many people ask me, “Pastor, since

I've been filled with the Holy Spirit, I feel different, but it doesn't seem like much else has changed." They go on to express their concern that a week, two weeks, a month has passed, and yet dramatic events still aren't filling their days "like all those people" they've heard testify.

I usually seek to comfort them with two facts:

My experience with dramatic testimonies is that they are honest but usually abbreviated. People report, in condensed version, things that took much longer to come about. Don't feel like a second-class Christian when time seems to be passing by and action seems slow.

God is never in a hurry. Yes, the presence of the Holy Spirit within us does bring an instant witness; He's there and He's at work. (See Romans 8:14.) But remember this: the gifts and the fruit of the Spirit aren't unwrapped with haste or grown at a moment's notice. If things aren't happening fast, that's normal.

The relevance of our learning to recognize that God's delays are not denials is that such understanding can defuse the tendency to feel unworthy (condemned) simply because things aren't happening as quickly as we think they would if we were somehow more acceptable to God.

The simple fact of the matter is that the Lord has quiet times of dealing with our souls. When they come, be of good courage. If you have opened yourself up to the Holy Spirit, be patient. The Holy Spirit knows what He's doing, and a little more time won't make Him falter or fail. God doesn't have to dash about busily in order to prove Himself. He's the One who's in charge, not you. Don't compensate by getting busy yourself, or most likely you will have to undo your work.

Some time ago, after the passing of a family member, I was moved to do a study on God's activities "in the dark." I was amazed at the number of major events in the Bible in which

victory was wrought in the midst of darkness:

Creation's light burst into the darkness of chaos (Gen. 1).

Jacob wrestled all night and gained a new identity (Gen. 32).

Israel's Passover deliverance took place in the night (Exod. 12).

Gideon's battle unto victory began in midnight hours (Judg. 7).

Jesus's cross was immersed in a sky of inky blackness though it was midday (Luke 23).

Even when Jesus comes again, it will be as a "thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:2, MEV) and during an era of history predicted as one in which "darkness shall cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples" (Isa. 60:2). This truth [of the Holy Spirit] can bring brightness and exhilaration to your soul.

Time to Get to Work

The Holy Spirit is ministering to your need now. Whatever the apparent darkness, God never forsakes the works of His hands. (See Psalm 138:8.) Rather than allowing the darkness of waiting to become a shadow of doubt, and instead of letting a cloud of questioning deceive you into believing that you are the victim of God's apparent inactivity or unconcern, learn this wisdom: *dark times are intended for your rest*. When they come, lean back and recline in the everlasting arms of the Almighty. Allow the Holy Spirit to work out and through what He's surely doing. I guarantee you that when morning comes, you'll be surprised!

Years of pastoring have taught me that the healing and deliverance of human souls can only be preserved where responsible obedience is manifest by those receiving the Holy Spirit's rebuilding within them. Jesus's words to the restored

include this advice, which we are wise to heed: "Now you are well; so stop sinning, or something even worse may happen to you," (John 5:14, NLT). Luke 11:24–26 teaches us, "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, it goes through dry places seeking rest. Finding none, it says, 'I will return to my house, from which I came.' When it comes, it finds it swept and furnished. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that man is worse than the first" (MEV). These are hard words. But Jesus also said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more," (John 8:11).

What should we do with all of this?

Well, for one thing, thank the Holy Spirit that He is jealous enough to crowd you against the wall. Give thanks to God that He cares enough about you to not allow you to wander off the narrow but joy-filled pathway of holiness and true abundant living.

When you feel overwhelmed by the circumstances of life, ask Him to show you what He's doing. He wants to get your attention. He will not allow you to be defeated by your [enemies] or your own wayward human impulses.

Then, once you hear His voice saying, "Come," return to Him. Come back. He will bring the power of the cleansing blood of Jesus that not only carries away the stains of sin but also filters out whatever is toxic to His new life. He will identify the hidden works of darkness. He will dissolve bondages. He will not permit you to continue to grieve the Spirit. He is your permanent Helper.

He who has come to help you see your life rebuilt will also come to see your life advanced into His purposes. He will respond to your every prayer, and He will nurture your soul, reminding you of His loving character and His clear truth.

The Holy Spirit will restore, establish, strengthen and settle

you, today and every day of the rest of your life.

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