

He Hooked Me

Despite a “solid Christian” upbringing—raised in Hong Kong by Southern Baptist missionaries—I don’t remember ever being taught specifically about the Holy Spirit during my youth. Not one sermon or Bible study devoted to who He is, what He does, why we need Him ... nothing.

Like the kid on the playground picked for teams only because he was the coolest kid’s little brother, the Holy Spirit became a tagalong idea to my understanding of God. I doubt those raising me spiritually intended to shun the Holy Spirit so badly. Sure, He was always trumpeted as the divine inspirer of Scripture. And He was a staple on Sunday school flannelgraphs as the “dove from above” who accompanied Jesus.

But there was no talk of the Holy Spirit being an actual person like Jesus or the Father. Other than acknowledging by rote the Spirit’s fruit, there wasn’t a connection to how He regularly operated in us to produce such fruit. Certainly passages such as 1 Corinthians 12:8-11 (listing the Spirit’s gifts) weren’t discussed. After all, our mission board, though not cessationist on paper, sent home any appointees found speaking in tongues or publicly confessing to such “extreme” gifts of the Spirit.

This all changed for me when my friend took me to a worship service in a remote refugee camp. The service was entirely in Cantonese (something I was used to), I was the only foreigner in the crowd (also a norm for me), and surrounding me were former drug addicts, gang members and criminals (not so typical). None of that mattered when, for three hours, I joined them in intense repentance, worship and prayer as we cried out for *Sing-Lihng* (the Holy Spirit) to have His way among us.

This new way of interacting with the Spirit was enough to ruin me for life. Yet just when I thought the service was over the leading minister began to lay hands on those who had come up front for healing or prayer. For the next hour I watched physical ailments disappear, countenances transform and mouths speak in new languages. No showmanship or flair—none of the “charismania” I later found so prevalent in American churches. Just the Holy Spirit responding in power to pure cries for Him.

I was hooked.

Almost 20 years later, I still am. There’s nothing in this world like watching the Holy Spirit respond to and move among people who desire Him. I still melt whenever He decides to take over an everyday conversation or use me to offer someone unexpected hope. The more I watch Him move through imperfect vessels like me, the more I see how His work is truly perfect.

Yet for all the wonderful “stuff” He does, I’ve reached a point where *really* knowing the Spirit—as a person—is more valuable than any power-filled sign or fruit. Maybe you’re there too. If so, I hope you enjoy as much as I do this issue of *Charisma*, dedicated to the person (and yes, power) of the Holy Spirit.

CONTRIBUTING TO THIS ISSUE ...

Often referred to as the “father of the prophetic movement,” **Bill Hamon** was baptized in the Holy Spirit 60 years ago. He has since activated and trained more than a quarter million people in the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Matt Sorger was pursuing a degree in medicine when God called him to be a full-time revivalist. Today his favorite prescription (besides the Holy Spirit) is eating a bowl of chocolate peanut butter ice cream every night. Um, let's talk, Matt.

For 30-plus years, **Rachel Burchfield** and her husband, Tommy, have reached families via a church/youth camp, Bible school, TV show and now a Houston-area church. But how many of those know Rachel is also certified chocolatologist?

If you ever meet **Craig S. Keener**, professor of New Testament at Palmer Theological Seminary of Eastern University, ask him about how he met and married his wife, Médine (pictured), a fellow professor. Trust us, it's a great story.