

6 Things That Block the Holy Spirit's Power

Last weekend while I was preaching at a church in central California, a young man came to the altar to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. He was eager to go deeper spiritually. Someone prayed for him for a while, but nothing happened.

I walked over to the young man a few minutes later and told him I would pray for him some more after the meeting was dismissed. I've learned that sometimes there are blockages that can prevent people from receiving the fullness of the Spirit, so I always try to discern what must be moved out of the way.

In this guy's case, his heart was in a great deal of pain because his father had abandoned his family. He wanted God to baptize him with the Spirit, but the pain of rejection was like a gaping wound that needed urgent attention. As soon as I began to address this problem, he began sobbing in my arms.

After we prayed about his father issues, and he got the healing he needed, he quickly received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. A fresh joy filled his heart. And a new heavenly language began pouring out of his mouth. I encouraged him to pray in tongues for a while as he received the Spirit's anointing.

This next Sunday, May 24, is the official day of Pentecost—when Christians all over the world celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the church. But Pentecost should also be a very personal experience for you. Have you, or someone you know, struggled to receive this supernatural infilling?

Here are some reasons why there might be a blockage:

1. Doubt or intellectual pride. In the 1960s a journalist named John Sherrill decided to write a book discrediting the phenomenon of speaking in tongues. But after he interviewed countless people about this experience, his doubts were shattered and he was baptized in the Holy Spirit Himself. His book, *They Speak With Other Tongues*, became a Christian classic. Spiritual experiences cannot be figured out with the mind. To receive the Spirit's infilling you must let go of your intellectual arguments and display childlike faith (see Matt. 18:2-4).

2. Religious tradition. I knew an Episcopal priest who was filled with the Holy Spirit in the 1970s in New York City. He was excited about the new vitality he felt in his faith—and thrilled that his wife had experienced a physical healing. But when he shared his testimony with his bishop, he was told he was crazy! And the bishop referred him to a psychiatrist! Religious people who are locked into “the way we’ve always done it” find it hard to receive the anointing of the Holy Spirit. You must be willing to break free from tradition.

3. Fear of the supernatural. Some Christians grew up in denominations that taught against the infilling of the Holy Spirit. They were told that Pentecostals are all fanatics who go into trances, speak mindless gibberish and swing from chandeliers. Actually, the first disciples in the New Testament spoke in tongues and experienced miracles—yet their faith was not strange. It should be the norm! People who are afraid of God's supernatural power will struggle to receive it.

4. Unconfessed sin. The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit can be “quenched” as well as “grieved” (1 Thess. 5:19; Eph. 4:30). Because He is so holy, our sinful habits and attitudes can cause Him to withdraw. This is why it's so important for us to walk in constant communion with God, and to be willing to repent quickly when we know we have sinned. Some people “stuff” their secret sins in the closets of their hearts. If

you want to be filled with the Spirit, you must be willing to open those closets and invite the light of God's holiness into every dark corner of your life.

5. Emotional wounds. Like the young man I prayed for last weekend, some people are just too burdened with emotional baggage to be filled with the Spirit. Some have been abused, others weighted down by anxiety, others grieved or depressed. They need healing first. Like Lazarus on the day he was raised from the dead, they are bound by the grave clothes of the past, and they need to be unwrapped before they can experience God's full anointing (see John 11:44). Healing is often needed before a person can receive the blessing of Holy Spirit baptism.

6. An unyielded spirit. You cannot be filled with the Holy Spirit if you are full of yourself. Some people are too willful. They have not surrendered their plans, finances, relationships or time to God. They have their lives planned out and they don't want God interrupting their agendas. Yet God is looking to fill hearts that have been emptied and surrendered. Only the fully yielded can experience the fullness of His power.

If you have not received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, or if the flow of the Spirit has been blocked in your life, empty your heart today and prepare for your own personal Pentecost.

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