

Anne Graham Lotz: I Was 29 Years Old Before I Actually Noticed the Holy Spirit

How many things have been around us for a long time that we simply have not noticed?

Like the bagel lever on my toaster. I recently went online to find another toaster because the one I've had for about 20 years no longer toasted both sides of the bread. When reading the reviews of the brand I was interested in, I came across one purchaser who was pleased that the model she selected toasted one side of her bagel while leaving the other side warm and chewy. I jumped up to see whether that could be why my toaster was toasting only one side of my bread. Sure enough. My toaster had a bagel feature that was turned on. When I turned it off and put in a slice of bread, both sides toasted evenly. I had to laugh, even as I felt foolish for not having noticed the bagel feature that had been there as long as I had owned the toaster.

While toasters hold nowhere near the significance of the Holy Spirit, could it be that many of us have never really noticed Him either? Maybe we've never been taught to notice Him. Even though I was raised in a home where Jesus was beloved and obeyed, I don't remember being taught about the Holy Spirit. This has made me wonder whether you would say the same thing.

What have you learned or been taught about the Holy Spirit? The only recollection I have of any mention of the Holy Spirit is from church—and we went to church every Sunday. Except that He wasn't called the Holy Spirit. He was called the Holy Ghost. At the end of the church service, the pastor would pronounce the benediction, indicating in my small child's mind that now we could go home and have a delicious Sunday lunch.

So I wasn't very attentive or curious about the way he concluded with a benediction. I was vaguely aware that he always pronounced the final prayer *in the name of the Father, in the name of the Son and in the name of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

It was not until years later when I was teaching a weekly Bible class that I learned the amazing truth of who the Holy Spirit is. I was 29 years old, in my second year of Bible teaching and doing my best to convey insights into the Gospel of John for the 500 women who sat before me each Wednesday. In hindsight, I was like the blind leading the blind. The only reason I knew more than they did was that I had studiously crammed during the week leading up to the lecture.

The week before Feb. 22, 1978, I was cramming as usual in preparation to teach John 14 to my class. And there it was! Jesus told His disciples, "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. He is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to receive Him because it doesn't see Him or know Him. But you do know Him, because He remains with you and will be in you" (John 14:16-17, HCSB).

Several thoughts came to me in quick succession:

- That the Spirit was another counselor.
- That the Spirit was a distinct person from Jesus but just like Him.
- That the Spirit would come from the Father.
- That the Spirit was with the disciples at that time but would be in them at a future time.

Like a time-delayed video of a flower bud opening into full bloom, the revelation seemed to unfold gradually. The Spirit would be another counselor. So who was the first counselor, who would make the Spirit another one? Jesus! The Spirit would be exactly like Jesus yet another distinct person. He would

come down from God. Even as Jesus had come down from God in human form, the Spirit would come down from God in spirit form. Jesus clearly identified the Counselor as the Holy Spirit (John 14:26). The disciples already knew Him because Jesus was filled with the Spirit. They were with Jesus; therefore, they were already with the Spirit. But Jesus was announcing that a day would come when they would no longer be with the Spirit because the Spirit would be sent to actually indwell them.

What an amazing, wonderful discovery that still thrills me! It is more than worthwhile to give Him our attention so we can get to know Him, love Him and enjoy the presence of the one who is Jesus in me—and in you. {eo}

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