

Anne Graham Lotz: Stop Trying to Earn the Holy Spirit's Love

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. He is the Spirit of truth” (John 14:16-17, CSB).

What do you know about the one whom Jesus promised He would ask the Father to give us, in His absence? How much do you know about the Holy Spirit? Growing up, I can never remember being taught about the Holy Spirit. I knew His name because the pastor of the little mountain church I belonged to always ended the Sunday morning service with a benediction in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He was also mentioned at weddings when the bride and groom were pronounced joined together in the same three names, or when someone was baptized. But it wasn't until I began studying the Bible in order to teach it that I increasingly got to know this one we refer to as the third person of the Trinity. I discovered He is not spooky; He is not an “add-on” or an optional extra in the Christian life. He is a divine necessity. Yet one misconception of who He is lingered in my thoughts.

When I received Jesus as my Savior, my assumption had been that the Holy Spirit was “assigned” to me. I thought He had come into my life because He had no option. I was now His “job”—His responsibility. My view of Him was that He was strictly professional, a perfectionistic stickler for details and someone who would keep me in line until one day He would present me to the Father and say something like “Here she is. I've done My best to work with what I had.” This harmful misconception could have led me to living a lie, as I would have tried hard to impress Him. I could have burned myself out trying hard to earn His love.

Then one day, while reading my Bible, I was gripped by the following: "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30, NIV). While I understand that Scripture is warning us not to intentionally, willfully sin, the word "grieve" caught and held my attention. I reflected on grief in my own life and knew I had experienced that emotion only when I deeply cared about someone or something. I grieved when my mother went to heaven. I grieved when my husband followed her there about eight years later. I grieved when my father joined them both. And I realized that "grief" is a love word. I grieve because I love my mother and my husband and my father.

This realization turned the light on in my thinking as I realized that if I can grieve the Holy Spirit, it's because He loves me. The Holy Spirit loves me! That was a profound, revolutionary thought. He's not just a professional partner. He's not just assigned to me. He doesn't live within me because He has to—He lives within me because He wants to live within me. He deeply cares about what I do and who I become. When I do the right thing, He rejoices. When I do the wrong thing, He grieves. Not only is He spiritually and practically involved in my life, He is also emotionally caught up in who I am and who I am to become. What a difference that simple truth has made in my perspective. I can be myself with the Holy Spirit. I don't have to be "on." I can relax and be transparent with Him. I can trust Him completely because He truly loves me!

And the Holy Spirit loves you too! He cares deeply about what you care about because He cares about you (see 1 Pet. 5:7). It doesn't matter how small or how large your concern is. He cares. He understands. He wants what's best for you. He desires for you to fulfill your God-given potential. He wants to ease your burden, solve your problem, comfort your broken heart, bind up your wounds, bring you through the valley of the shadow, shower you with blessing upon blessing. And yes,

He wants to make you holy—because He loves you! He will work all things—*all things*—for your good (see Rom. 8:28). So relax. Stop trying to impress Him. Stop working so hard to earn His love. Be open and honest and transparent. Live with the confidence that you are deeply, unconditionally, permanently loved by Him.

I cannot begin to express in words what He has meant to me during this past year. I have experienced His constant companionship. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that He has carried me through not just somehow, but triumphantly. So if you, too, are faced with a deadly disease ... divorce ... death ... disaster, open your heart and life to the one who is Jesus in you. {eoa}

Anne Graham Lotz, *second child of Billy and Ruth Graham, is the founder of AnGeL Ministries and former chairman for the National Day of Prayer Task Force. She has authored 15 books, including her upcoming release, Jesus in Me: Experiencing the Holy Spirit as a Constant Companion.*

This article originally appeared at .

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