

Holy Spirit Baptism Radically Transforms Struggling Missionaries—And Believers Across Denominations

As a self-confessed “arrogant seminary student,” Brad Long thought he had it all together theologically when he and his wife, Laura, moved to South Korea as missionaries. But without the baptism in the Holy Spirit, they found themselves struggling in ministry. That’s when something wonderful happened.

“We were introduced to the work of the Holy Spirit in a new way,” Long says. “It was just extraordinary what God was doing. It was there in South Korea, where I was actually teaching theology at a large Presbyterian seminary, that both my wife and I really found out how helpless we were despite our great education. Despite the good training we had, we found ourselves powerless. We were struggling. We did not know how to share our faith. Working cross-culturally was hard, and frankly, we were desperate. We were desperate for more of God.”

The Longs observed other missionaries and the Korean believers, who, he says, were “incredibly effective” in their ministries.

“They were doing wonderful work,” he says. “Some of them were running hospitals. Others were presidents of colleges. But the thing that so impressed me was that these people had a living vital faith in Jesus Christ. I mean, they were alive, and I wanted to know their secret.”

Eventually the couple discovered the power of the Word and Spirit of God working in tandem in their lives.

"The secret was, of course, being grounded in the Bible and knowing Jesus, but it was [also] the empowering work of the Holy Spirit," Long says. "I was so hungry, as was Laura, and the two of us then, while we were there as missionaries in Korea, were baptized with the Holy Spirit, and it completely changed our lives."

The Longs saw the power of Spirit baptism in believers from across the denominational spectrum.

"These people weren't flaky, and they were from all denominations," he says. "They were Presbyterians. They were Baptist. They're also Roman Catholics. These were all people who loved Jesus and were filled with the Holy Spirit."

Today, Dr. Long is executive director of Presbyterian Reformed Ministries International (PRMI,), an organization serving Christians of all churches and denominations that started in a small group of Presbyterian ministers in the 1960s. But first, he had to experience the baptism of the Spirit for himself.

"R.A. Torrey was part of the great revival of the great move of God that took place at the turn of the last century, 1900, and it was his great grandson who laid hands on me," he says. "I was then filled with the Holy Spirit there in South Korea."

For 30 years, Dr. Long has led PRMI, which is headquartered in the mountains of Western North Carolina, and he works together with Rev. Martin Boardman, the organization's prayer mobilizer, who is based in Alberta, Canada. Boardman has his own experience of coming to understand the Spirit's work in his life.

"I experienced the Holy Spirit filling me or baptizing me in a Bible study setting when I was in my first year of university," Boardman says. "It was an amazing experience, but I had no idea what was happening to me or why I felt the way that I did. It just felt like God was pouring His love into me, and it just was rising up."

PRMI's Dunamis Project helped Boardman understand what happened to him in that experience.

"After that, I did step into opportunities for ministry, but didn't really understand that it was connected with the empowering work of the Spirit until really close to 15 years later when I got connected with Presbyterian Reformed Ministries International and the Dunamis course," he says. "They began to go through and explain who the person and the work of the Holy Spirit was, and that gave me the grid and framework to really understand what had happened to me and to really recognize that, from that point forward, I stepped into a place of empowered ministry."

Long reports that "thousands upon thousands of people" have taken the Dunamis Project course, which is a five-day intensive equipping event.

"There's been an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and this thing has gone global, all over the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Korea, China and Latin America," Long says.

Dunamis participants see that PRMI subscribes wholeheartedly to not divorcing God's Word from His Spirit.

"That's been one of the central themes of this ministry, putting Word and Spirit together," Long says with a caution. "Anytime you separate them, you're going to end up in probably heresy or in powerless churches and with powerless Christians. The Word and Spirit need to go together always, always, always."

Listen to this *Charisma Connection* podcast interview to learn more about what God is doing through His Spirit at PRMI. {eo}