

Spirit and Truth, Right Brain and Left Brain

The more I interact with my **cessationist** brothers and sisters, the more I see that in many ways, we are passing each other like ships in the night, and it has nothing to do with one side being committed to the Lord and the other not.

Instead, it seems as if we sometimes have fundamentally different ways of looking at the same things—fundamentally different perspectives and, in a sense, fundamentally different “spiritual personalities.”

How can we better understand each other, learn from each other and serve together to glorify **Jesus** and touch a dying world? I take an entire chapter in my just-released *Authentic Fire* book to address this very question.

Now, to be perfectly clear, I am absolutely convinced that the Scriptures testify clearly to the ongoing nature of the gifts of the Spirit. In fact, the longest chapter in *Authentic Fire* is devoted to studying that issue in depth.

At the same time, it is clear to me that both **charismatics** and **cessationists** have unique contributions to make to the church and to the world and that there are personality traits unique to each camp.

With this in mind, I propose that we take a few minutes and make a real attempt to understand each other better, putting aside our theological differences and focusing instead on our “spiritual personalities.”

Now, there is no question that one person’s strength is often another person’s weakness, and vice versa. Some people are totally analytical, others totally intuitive. Some people love to confront; others love to comfort. Some are didactic

teachers, others motivational leaders. Some people are born to invent, others to research and record patents for inventions; some are born to lead armies, others to care for the elderly—and you had better believe these respective giftings are quite different.

It's the same thing in terms of our spiritual personalities, and the better we understand each other, the better we can be of help to one another. As Paul wrote in Romans 12, "For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them" (Rom 12:4-6, ESV).

One believer is circumspect and sober but can tend toward skepticism; another believer is willing to step out in faith but can tend toward gullibility. Each one needs the other.

Consider the words of Jesus in John 4:24, where He said that "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit [or Spirit] and truth."

Obviously, there is total harmony between spirit (or Spirit) and truth, and it is not a matter of either-or but of both-and. At the same time, Jesus is describing two elements here, spirit (or Spirit) and truth, and on a certain level (and I'm simply using this text here to make a point rather than claiming that this was what Jesus meant), **charismatics**, who are people of the Spirit, can put more emphasis on spirit/Spirit, whereas **cessationists**, who are people of the truth, can put more emphasis on truth. Both are equally essential.

Consider also the Lord's rebuke of the Sadducees in Matthew 22:29: "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God" (NIV). Knowing *both* God's Word and God's power are essential for spiritual soundness and

fruitful ministry. Knowing one without the other leads to errors and extremes. Knowing neither is fatal. Jesus emphasized the importance of both.

But it is possible (and all too common) for believers to be so heavily into the Word (in terms of studying the Bible and learning the original languages and getting into proper exegesis and **theology**) that they lose the vibrancy of their fellowship with the Lord and lack greatly in the empowering of His Spirit (although this ought not be the case, since both biblical study and spiritual passion should go hand in hand).

On the flip side, it is possible (and all too common) for believers to be so heavily into the things of the Spirit (in terms of wanting to see God's power touch a dying world and cultivating **worship** and intimacy with God) that they become sloppy in their study of Scripture and doctrinal foundations (although, again, this ought not be the case).

I know that my Scripture-expositing, **cessationist** brethren sometimes listen aghast to the **charismatic** eisegesis of some TV preachers, while our Spirit-filled, **charismatic** brethren look aghast at the power-depleted ministries of some cessationist colleagues.

Why not have *both* the accurate Word and the power of the Spirit? And can you really have an accurate understanding of the Word *without* acknowledging the Spirit's power for our day? And can you really walk in the fullness of the Spirit *without* being grounded in the Word?

The truth is, as much as there is some "charismatic chaos," there is also some "Baptist boredom." One group sometimes falls into fanaticism, the other group into formalism, and both are equally wrong and dangerous (although each group sees the other's weaknesses as being far more dangerous, tending to exaggerate them as well because they seem so foreign).

Wouldn't it be great if, through learning from each other and listening to each other, we could produce fire and faithfulness, power and precision, energetic worship and exegetical wisdom? After all, aren't we commanded to love God with all our heart and all our mind and all our soul and all our strength?

Just think of what happens when there is holy cross-pollination! To the extent that we have both Word and power, truth and Spirit operating in our lives, it will be life-giving for us and helpful for others.

(Excerpted and adapted from *Authentic Fire: A Response to John MacArthur's Strange Fire*, where I give practical examples of how this works out in our daily lives in the Lord.)

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