

The Reason You May Unwittingly Ignore the Holy Spirit

I had just finished presenting what most would consider to be a typical evangelistic invitation. All across the room, heads were bowed, and eyes were closed.

Adding to the cliché call to repentance, I stoically instructed, “I don’t want anyone looking around the room right now. This moment is just between you and God.”

The music played while I pleaded, but after the passing of several awkward minutes, not a single person responded to my heartfelt invitation. I was tempted to dismiss the matter and transition to another portion of the service. However, before I made the switch, the Holy Spirit gently nudged me in a different direction.

In my spirit, I sensed His desire for the people to begin praying in the spirit—praying in tongues.

Following the leading of the Holy Spirit, I instructed the people to begin praying in tongues. They lifted their hands and began to do so.

While the people prayed, just after the first minute or so, I was bombarded with negative thoughts, bothersome lies of the enemy.

The first thought that assaulted my mind was this one: *This will only terrify the unbeliever! You’re not supposed to pray in tongues in front of unbelievers.*

Whether that suggestion was directly from the enemy or from some misguided theologian I had heard, there was still a disruption within me. But the Bible says this concerning the

gift of tongues:

“So you see that speaking in tongues is a sign, not for believers, but for unbelievers. Prophecy, however, is for the benefit of believers, not unbelievers” (1 Cor. 14:22, MEV).

I overcame that worry and encouraged the people further, “Keep praying in the Holy Ghost.” It was my way of pushing back against the inner conflict.

Another thought rushed at me: “Believers shouldn’t all pray in tongues at once. This is disorder!”

But the Bible says:

“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to speak” (Acts 2:4).

We continued to pray in tongues.

About two minutes had then passed, and we were all still praying in tongues. Still the enemy resisted what God was trying to do and attempted a final deception.

“This is bizarre. How are you going to reach people if you’re allowing something so odd to take place?”

It was right around this time that a man about my age came walking down the aisle and toward the stage upon which I stood. He was visibly shaken. With tears streaming down his face and his mouth shaking with prayers, he walked right up to the platform, fell to his knees and began to weep.

At this point, I calmed the crowd and stepped down to converse with the man. I said, “Hey there, look up at me for a second. I’d like to talk with you.” When he looked up at me, his eyes were still filled with tears, and his face was red from sobbing.

I asked him, "Can you tell me why you're crying?" I put the microphone to his mouth and waited for his response. What he said touched my heart.

"Because," he explained, "I've been trying to find God for so long. And tonight, He found me."

The church began to cheer and worship the Lord. And right there, in front of us all, that man gave his heart to Jesus and was born again.

What couldn't be accomplished by human effort was accomplished by the work of the Holy Spirit. That happened several years ago, but the lesson I learned in that service has been cemented into the foundation of my faith and ministry.

Dear reader, I had, at that point, been in ministry for a few years and had grown accustomed to the almost systematic approach to evangelism. Thankfully, I have a friendship with the Holy Spirit that guided me to embrace a more effective flow of ministry.

"And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:4).

I believe in speaking in tongues, but this article isn't about speaking in tongues. I believe that the Holy Spirit is heaven's greatest evangelist (as was exemplified through my story), but this article isn't just about His evangelistic grace. This article is about choosing to depend upon the Spirit's ability over our own.

When I write that we must never rely upon systems and programs, I am certain that you, dear reader, will enthusiastically affirm such a truth.

But ministry and spiritual living can become so familiar to us that we enter a place of human effort, often without realizing

it. In fact, almost everyone who is relying upon human effort for ministry and spirituality is doing so without realization.

After all, who really decides, “I think I’ll do it my way instead”?

No, most believers wouldn’t so much as dare to so blatantly reject or stifle the work of the Holy Spirit. So if one does stop depending upon the Spirit, he does so unknowingly. I would even go as far as saying that most believers would become offended at the suggestion that they have moved away from the Spirit’s method of ministry approach. But many have. None of us would do so willingly, so we must open ourselves to the question, “Have I begun to rely upon my efforts instead of His?”

In that church service, I was battling very subtle, very nuanced suggestions of the enemy—or possibly of my own flesh. Yet, I, in all of my practiced presentation and expended effort, couldn’t present Christ in a way that compelled the lost to surrender in humble repentance at His feet.

I may have worn the title of “evangelist.” Furthermore, I may have even led several hundreds to Christ at that point in my ministry.

Who cares? That didn’t matter.

What mattered was my surrender to His leading. What always matters is obedience to His gentle, guiding voice. He is, after all, heaven’s greatest evangelist. No one can present the Glory of the person of Christ like He can. No one can convict a soul of sin as the Spirit does. In matters of ministry, He is masterful.

The Holy Spirit is not just the greatest evangelist; He’s the greatest pastor, teacher, prophet and apostle. When we carry out our ministry tasks with His aid and are conscious of our need for His enabling, a profound and powerful grace comes

upon us. There is a certain, unique dynamic to Spirit-led ministry. So we must model our approach, not after the approach of men and women who have gone before us, but after His unique and responsive direction as it pertains to each moment.

Without the Holy Spirit, we begin to rely upon systems and strategies. Yesterday's revival can so easily become today's religion. Men have a way of systemizing everything.

But there is no substitute for the genuine power and presence of the Holy Spirit. You cannot duplicate His craftsmanship. We have to stop limiting His timing to our church calendars and schedules. We need to stop confining His power to back rooms and "special services." Methods cannot replace miracles. Programs cannot replace power. Structure cannot replace Spirit. And our pursuit of attendance should never become more important than our pursuit of the anointing.

The truth is that the world is hungry for the very thing from which much of the church has shifted away. People want the supernatural, and only the Holy Spirit can bring it to the church.

The Holy Spirit is the greatest church builder. Nobody can win souls, build a church, or expand God's kingdom better than He. If we will embrace His leading, humbly submit to His expertise and seek His guidance, then we will embrace a better way to be God's kingdom. For He is not a liability; He's our only hope at drawing men to salvation. He's our only hope of building disciples.

He's our only hope at properly presenting Jesus.

Be practical, yes. Gain wisdom from leaders, yes. Be organized and orderly, yes. But never prioritize any of that over what the Spirit of God can do.

Want to build people in the faith? Follow the greatest

pastoral anointing in the Earth—the Holy Spirit.

Want to draw crowds? Obey the enabler of the miraculous, the Holy Spirit.

Want to build a church? Consult with the One who built the church of Acts, which is the model church. Consult with the Holy Spirit.

Want to win souls? Be graced by the Holy Spirit, heaven's greatest evangelist. {eoa}

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