

Diving Deeper in the Holy Spirit

Intimacy with the Spirit of God is spiritual, not mechanical. Some of the most powerful, intimate moments of our lives are beyond human understanding and logic. They are beyond words. Our relationship with God is often like that. The beauty of God's presence and glory cannot be described or understood from a natural perspective, as if we could figure Him out. Rather, the beauty of God's presence and glory is to be tasted and seen. It is to be experienced.

Fast Start, Slower Progress

There was a time in my life when I was so very close to God. As a young teenager, I had extraordinary visitations from the Holy Spirit, and praying was as easy as breathing. I felt such peace and refreshment in my life with the Lord. I would spend hours on end reading and meditating on the Word of God, praying in the Spirit and worshipping in the presence of Christ.

Passion for God raged like a fire deep within my being. Love for God, the lost and the church were the beat of my heart. But slowly I grew distracted and careless in my walk with the Lord, and I stumbled often, yielding to fleshly impulses and creating strongholds. The complacent, lukewarm waters of life began to quench the fire that once consumed me. This resulted in a 10-year dry season.



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I used to pray, "God, bring me back to the place where I once was! I want to go back to where I was!" My cries often were met with silence, and frustration would well up within me.

Proverbs 13:12a (NIV) says, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick," and that is how I felt. Through all my praying, the only thing that kept coming to me was to be faithful in the wilderness and that this was only temporary. I didn't realize it at the time, but God had no desire to "bring me back." He wanted me to go beyond my past experiences into greater glory.

I still loved God, served Him and even ministered, but my heart was like a bag of dust. I so desperately needed refreshing. Sometimes, even while serving God, you can forget Him. You can preach about Him without ever being with Him. You can minister to God's people without ever ministering to Him directly. I have been there. The vast majority of believers are stuck in this state. They have just enough of God to make them miserable with their sin and just enough of the world to make them apathetic to the things of God. In this dry season the Spirit taught me to remember Him. It's easy to forget the Lord when you have lost fellowship with Him. But once you regain it, you are flooded with the familiar embraces of His life-giving presence.

Do you feel distant? Draw near. Do you long for refreshment? Draw near! Throw yourself at His feet. Sometimes that drawing requires patience and trust. But if you do your part, He will do His part. He can be trusted!

It is faith that He is after. We must not be moved by what we see or feel but by whom we believe in. When you desire to know God, you will gain everything that comes with knowing Him. Intimacy is incubated in the womb of daily, consistent fellowship with God. The door is faith in God—believing "that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6b, NKJV). Draw near even when you don't sense Him right away. If you sow to what pleases Him simply because He is worthy, you will reap of His life and presence throughout your day!

The Picture Coming Into Focus

In 2011, I had the opportunity to visit Fond Parisien, one of the poorest regions in all of Haiti and possibly the world. I saw poverty in that area that would break even the toughest hearts. At one local orphanage, the poverty was so intense the children didn't even have adequate clothing. During that visit I was ambushed by little children wanting to greet me. I took out my small camera and began taking pictures and videos of the kids as they clapped and sang.

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One kid was especially curious about my camera. As I showed him how it worked, he just stared at himself on the screen. It was as if he had never really seen himself. To my surprise and disbelief, he hadn't! Many of the kids were mesmerized by their own image. It was as if they were responding to a magic trick or something. They may have seen their reflection in a pond, a stream or perhaps a metal pot but never in an actual mirror.

When we think of a mirror, we think of "a polished or smooth surface (as of glass) that forms images by reflection" or "something that gives a true representation." But in biblical times mirrors weren't perfectly clear. Back then mirrors were often made of polished brass or copper, so they created dim reflections, and you had to look intently, often with a light, to see yourself. Knowing this adds a great deal of context to Paul's words to the church in Corinth: "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, and I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see as through a glass, dimly, but then, face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know, even as I also am known" (1 Cor. 13:11–12, MEV).

On this side of heaven, we are going to see and understand

things dimly, but a time is coming when we will see Christ face to face in all His glory and radiance. My favorite Scripture of all time is 2 Corinthians 3:18 (NKJV): “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

When we turn to Christ, the veil of spiritual blindness is removed. And we with unveiled faces behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord and are transformed into the likeness and image of the one we behold—Christ. You become what you behold. But you must understand that just like the ancient Corinthians looking in those primitive mirrors, you need to look purposefully and with the light of God’s Word. Right now you are not meant to see God’s fullness with perfect clarity. This transformation is progressive; you go from one degree of glory to the next. Your responsibility is to behold.

You are not going to see everything up front. You will see glimpse by glimpse.

Running the Race on God’s Circuit

Believers get frustrated often because they want to see the Lord through the lens of their own feelings, past experiences or preconceived thoughts about what God is like. But there is only one real way to look intently at Him, and it is through the lens of Scripture.

You can see God only in the mirror of His Word. As you reflect on that mirror by ingesting His Word and allowing Him to reveal it to you, you will see Him with greater accuracy and clarity, and you will be changed into what you behold. Be intentional in looking, and as you keep looking unto Christ through the Word, you will see more of Him from glory to glory!

You were meant to bear the image of God and reflect His glory

on this earth. But in order to properly reflect Him, you must reflect on His Word. With each small glimpse into His person through His Word, you will reflect more of Him.

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Seeing God's glory is not a physical seeing; it is a spiritual perceiving of His presence and goodness. It is being aware of God's glory in your life. It is not receiving a vision or image of His face, though visions can be part of a believer's life. Rather, it is reflecting upon Him and lifting your heart to Him. You are called to behold His glory, which you do through the Word. As you lift the Scriptures to the Spirit, He will reveal Himself more and more.

He desires to take you from one degree of glory to the next. Consider again what 2 Corinthians 3:18b (AMPC) says, that we are being transformed "in ever increasing splendor and from one degree of glory to another; [for this comes] from the Lord [Who is] the Spirit." The Lord, who is the Spirit, causes you to increase from one degree of knowing Him to the next degree of splendor. Nothing you can do or say can bring you closer. The great news is that if you are a child of God, you have been invited and are continually being invited.

We cannot live off of yesterday's manna. We must be endowed with the fresh oil and presence of Christ speaking and revealing Himself to us now.

When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they had to follow the cloud of God's glory by day and the pillar of His fire by night. God had to teach them to be a people of His presence. Where the presence moved, they moved; where the presence camped, they camped. Finally, the resting place of God's glory was in the temple, and then it was tabernacled within Christ, the living and greater temple.

Today His glory and fire live in a new tabernacle: your body. You are the dwelling place of God, and His glory resides in you by the Holy Spirit. Great is the mystery, hidden from ages and generations, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory! (See Col. 1:26–27.) The same God, the same one who invites us, wants to move and camp and lead you from one degree of glory to the next. Hallelujah!

Again, nothing you can do or say can cause you to move closer; it is only by His Spirit. This reality demands two very important responses from you: humility and dependence.

Humility, because you are sustained by God alone.

And dependence, because it is the Lord who takes you from one degree of fullness to the next.

He holds you and moves you. You just need to rely on His grace, strength and power. You must learn to embrace your weakness before God so you can depend on Him in everything; that is where the real power rests.

The secret of God's presence and power is absolute humility and dependence upon God Himself, not our own abilities or strengths. He can be trusted to take you from glory to glory!

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