



## **The Spirit-Filled Life**

### **Message Notes, April 23, 2017**

We have finished the series on Growing in Wholeness (though the journey continues), and we have joyously celebrated the resurrection of our Savior King. Where do we go from here? We look to the One who is central to our wholeness, the One who was the resurrection power on Easter morn, the One Jesus told us he would send to “be with us forever – the Spirit of truth.” We will spend the next month or so exploring and celebrating the nature and work of the Holy Spirit.

Today’s message invites us to examine our own theological and emotional understanding of the Holy Spirit. Talk of the Holy Spirit has a way of stirring things up. It will help us, if we can be honest about the ideas, emotions, hurts and/or fears that affect our posture toward the Holy Spirit. In getting these “out on the table,” we can be more yielded to the Lord to rightly mold our understanding.

#### **Why does talk about the Holy Spirit tend to stir things up?**

- Our enemy is terrified of the Holy Spirit. He opposes any stirring in us to surrender more fully to the Holy Spirit’s presence, purity and power.
- Our own flesh resists the Lordship of the Holy Spirit. We want to be lords of our own lives. We want to be in control. We are uncomfortable with submitting to One we cannot control. The Holy Spirit is *ruah* – the breath and wind of God. Like the wind, he is unpredictable.

#### **Spirit Wars (polarizations that have emerged throughout church history)**

- Charis-phobia vs. Charis-mania. *Charis* is the Greek word for “gift” that refers to the gifts the Spirit gives. Some, such as Dispensationalists, believe God has dispensed with the powerful/miraculous work of the Spirit – this was only for the early church. Others react to such ideas and therefore over-emphasize the dramatic, powerful aspects of the Holy Spirit to an unhealthy extreme.
- Word vs. Spirit. Evangelicals who want to focus on scripture and reason as the way to connect with God vs. Charismatics who want to focus on the Holy Spirit and experience as the primary dimension.
- Power vs. Purity. Both “camps” recognize the significance of the Holy Spirit, but the former is focused on his power reflected in gifts, signs, and wonders; the latter is focused on purity – the fruit/character that he produces in us.

Pastor Keith shared his own journey of varied experiences and evolving understanding of the Holy Spirit. He began in a typical evangelical church that focused on Word and character. Then in his teen years, he was introduced to the charismatic nature of the Holy Spirit, having a powerful, transforming encounter (baptism of the Spirit) at age 16. This experience deepened his faith and enriched his life, but was followed by various scenarios of hypocrisy, judgment and divisiveness that brought confusion and disillusionment for Keith. There was a period of dryness that ultimately led to a place of longing, surrender and renewal.

In short, Keith’s journey has been one of highs and lows, transformation and confusion. He has seen the Holy Spirit work in powerful, miraculous ways that brought freedom and healing in people’s lives, but there have also been times when he cried out for the Spirit to move and He did not. Keith professed: “I



believe deeply in the presence, purity and power of the Holy Spirit to move in our lives in miraculous, transforming ways, but He is not One I can predict or control. He is mighty and un-tame like the wind, but He is good.”

### **Conclusions**

1. Abuse of a thing should not nullify its proper use. For example, trying to use a lawnmower to trim a hedge does not mean lawnmowers are bad and should not be used. God is saying, “Don’t pass judgment on me and my Word based on the failures of people.”
2. It’s both/and (not either/or) – both Word and Spirit; both Purity and Power.
3. We need to be led faith and discernment, not fear.
  - How do 2 Timothy 1:7 and I John 4:18 capture this truth?
  - We should never fear anything God wants to do. He is always at work for good. He is good.
  - We need to exercise biblical discernment to “test” the validity of what we think the Spirit is doing. See 1 John 4:1.
4. We must seek the Giver before the gifts. It is God that we want and need, not just what He can give or do.
5. “We have this treasure in jars of clay” (2 Corinthians 4:7). We experience this glorious treasure of the Holy Spirit in our fractured, weak, imperfect lives; in these bodies that still contend with the “fleshly nature.”

### **Words of Encouragement**

1. To those who have little understanding or a fearful understanding of the Holy Spirit:
  - Don’t fear the unknown.
  - Don’t stand in judgment of those who have a charismatic experience of the Holy Spirit.
  - Don’t just align with people who think and feel like you do.
2. To those who are comfortable and excited about the charismatic movement of the Holy Spirit:
  - Don’t project/impose your experience on others.
  - Don’t stand in judgment of those who do not have a charismatic experience of the Holy Spirit.
  - Don’t just align with people who think and feel like you do.
  - Don’t assume that the Spirit and order can’t co-exist.
3. To all of us, three focal words:
  - Unity: John 17:22-23
  - Humility: Philippians 2:1-4
  - Love: 2 Corinthians 13:1-7

These three words and passages summarize our right posture for being filled with the Holy Spirit.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. What is your general posture towards the Holy Spirit – uncertain and guarded or open and inviting?
2. What past experiences underlie this posture?
3. Which of the five conclusions above is most helpful to you in coming to a healthy posture toward the Holy Spirit?
4. Have you had any spirit of judgment toward others that you need to repent of and release?