

# PERSONALIZING THE HOLY SPIRIT

By Dr. Raymond F. Culpepper, First Assistant General Overseer

Many Pentecostal Christians need a spiritual make-over. Some have tried to put the Holy Spirit in a box.

# **There is the box of tongues. The box of tongues limits the Holy Spirit's ministry to** spiritual language only. Some people falsely assume, for example, that if there are no tongues and interpretation in a church service, the Holy Spirit is absent.

# **There is the box of tradition.** Tradition is a good thing when it preserves and protects the true doctrines of Scripture. But tradition can become a trap if it is not based on the revelation of Biblical truth. This was clearly demonstrated by the Pharisees in Jesus' time.

# **There is the box of temperament.** This box attempts to limit the Holy Spirit and His work to our own personality characteristics. For example, if some people don't feel a certain way in church, or see a response that appeals to their personality, they falsely assume that the Holy Spirit is not manifested. I have observed that there is never an occasion when any of the New Testament writers said, "I *feel* the Holy Spirit." Their feelings, though very real, were a gate of the Holy Spirit, not a goal.

Perhaps the reason the feeling issue is missing in the New Testament is that believers did not *have* to feel the Holy Spirit. They understood that He was *with* them and *in* them. For example, my wife and I are one, according to the

Scriptures; but I don't have to feel it—I *know* it's true!

# **There is the box of “the Temple.”** *First of all*, the problem with this box is that it assumes that the church depicts a place, not a people. *Secondly*, it assumes that the only place the Holy Spirit is free to minister is within the confines of four walls. This box limits the Spirit only to what happens when God's people gather together in designated places of worship.

What if the Holy Spirit had been confined only to a building in the New Testament? The lame man “at the gate” would never have been healed (Acts 3:1-7). There never would have been miracles and healings in Samaria (8:4-8). The Gentiles would never have received the gospel (10). The 12 Ephesian disciples would never have been baptized in the Holy Spirit (19:1-7). There never would have been a revival on Malta (27:1-8).

How can we remove the boxes? What is the problem? The problem with all of the boxes is the misguided assumption that the Holy Spirit is an experience, rather than a person. **As a Person, He brings experience, but it is experience based on relationship.**

## **Understanding the Holy Spirit**

When we speak of the Holy Spirit, we must not think of Him as an *it*. In Pentecostal circles, some have been known to ask “Do you have it?” “Have you received it?” and “Do you feel it?” While we understand these statements based on our Pentecostal traditions, we must reinforce the truth that the Holy Spirit is not an *it*.

It is interesting to notice that **Jesus never referred to the Holy Spirit as only a**

**resource, a force or an experience. He presented the Holy Spirit with a personal pronoun.**

In fact, a close look at John 16:15-17 reveals Jesus using a personal pronoun nine times in only three verses as He talked about the Holy Spirit. Further, in John 14, 15 and 16, Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit 19 times in personal terms. Moreover, the New Testament gives many other personality references to the Holy Spirit:

1. The Holy Spirit can be blasphemed (Matthew 12:1, 2).
2. He testifies (John 15:26).
3. He can be lied to (Acts 5:3, 4).
4. He leads (Acts 8:29, Romans 8:14),
5. He speaks (Acts 13:2).
6. He commands (Acts 16:6, 7).
7. He guides (Acts 16:13).
8. He appoints (Acts 20:28).
9. He intercedes (Romans 8:26).
10. He can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30).
11. He can be insulted (Hebrews 10:29).

Let me reiterate: All of God's servants—pastors, teachers, leaders, men, women, youth and children—need the under girding knowledge that **at all times, in every situation, the Holy Spirit is present.**

Go back with me to the times of personal relationship Jesus had with His disciples. His relationship with them gives us a revelation. **Those times were more meaningful to Jesus than they were to the disciples.** He came to live with them, teach them, mentor them, and prepare

them. In fact, He asked in John 14:9, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me?” He wanted them to *know Him*, not just *experience Him*. He went on to say, “If you love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper” (vv, 15, 16). The Greek word for *another* means specifically “another of the same kind.” In other words, Jesus was saying, “The Father will give you Another just like Me.” This is the crescendo of relationship!

## Personalizing the Holy Spirit

**Imagine living in the physical presence of Jesus**, as the disciples did, for three-and-a-half years. Imagine the answers to thousands of questions, the joys of long walks, the challenge of His teachings and the revealing insights on what he said to the crowds.

Visualize hearing the Sermon on the Mount, watching Him feed 5,000 people and seeing Him raise three people from the dead. Hear His words of authority. Imagine hearing Jesus pray, sing and worship. Imagine laughing, listening, learning and living in His presence. What a **challenging and life-transforming experience** that must have been! But hear what He tells them:

*These things I have spoken to you **while being present** with you. But **the Helper, the Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in My name, He **will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you** (vv. 25, 26).*

*When the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, **He will testify of Me** (15:26).*

*But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, “Where are You going?” But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.*

*I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. **He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.** All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you (16:5-8, 12-15).*

In my personal Bible, there are 1,094 pages of actual Scripture: 843 in the Old Testament and 251 in the New Testament. In the 843 pages of the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit is mentioned 81 times. Some of these are Genesis 1:2, 6:3; Numbers 11:29; Judges 6:34, 14:6; and Ezekiel 36:26, 27.

In the 251 pages of the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is mentioned 261 times. Why are there so many more references to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament than there are in the Old Testament? There are three reasons:

**1. In the New Testament there is a New Covenant.** “Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant” (Hebrews 7:20-22). We now have access to God “by a new and living way which He (Christ) consecrated for us” (Hebrews 10:20). Jesus “took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you’” (Luke 22:20).

**2. In the New Testament there is a New Church.** It was no longer the “church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38), but a living, vibrant, invincible church built by Jesus himself (Matthew 16:18).

**3. In the New Testament there is a new C.E.O.** In contemporary language, the Holy Spirit is the Chief Operating Officer of the mind, mission, ministry and manifestation of Jesus. He said:

*He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.*

*All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of*

*Mine and declare it to you (John 16:13-15).*

Before the New Testament, the Holy Spirit came for special purposes to specific people. On the Day of Pentecost, the Spirit came with relational purposes for *all* believers. As a result, we can observe two things:

**1. All Believers Have the Holy Spirit.** “You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His (Romans 8:9).

**2. The Holy Spirit Does Not Have All Believers.** “Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:17, 18). As an intoxicated person is influenced by alcohol, so a believer should be controlled by the Spirit. Important differences

emerge, however,

- # The intoxicated person loses self-control; the Holy Spirit gives the believer self-control.
- # The drunk person's artificial happiness does not last; the Spirit-filled believer has an abiding joy in the Lord.
- # Alcohol precipitates inappropriate behavior that hurts others and causes embarrassment. Spirit-filled believers find that living in the Spirit is personally fulfilling and brings glory to God.

**Question: Does the Holy Spirit have you?**

## **How To Personalize the Holy Spirit**

**1. Pursue His Purity.** The very term *Holy Spirit* denotes purity. He is the *Holy Spirit*. To pursue the Holy Spirit is to pursue His wholistic work of purifying our motives, attitudes and behavior. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). We pursue purity in our personal lives by:

*Heeding God's Word.* "How can a . . . man keep his way pure? By living according to [God's] word" (Psalm 119:9, *NIV*).

*Seeking God's Ways.* "I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands" (v. 10).

*Internalizing God's Wisdom.* "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (v. 11).

**2. Perform with Power.** Jesus promised: "You shall receive power when the Holy

Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me” (Acts 1:8).

- # Power is *not* the Holy Spirit doing everything *for* you.
- # Power is *not* the Holy Spirit preventing problems and pains for you on this sin-cursed planet.
- # Power is *not* the Holy Spirit forcing God’s will on you, making you do what you don’t want to do.
- # Power is *not* you manipulating others.

Pentecostal power is the Holy Spirit working *in* you, *through* you, *to* you and *by* you.

Paul acknowledged his dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit when he wrote:

*My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:4, 5).*

Imagine what could happen in your life if you actualized the truth of the Scriptures that the Holy Spirit is with you—witnessing, working, and warring through you to do His will.

The word “Helper” in John 14:16 is the Greek word *paracletos*, or *paraclete*. Dr. David C. Cooper, in *Knowing the Holy Spirit*, says the two meanings of *paraclete* are “encourager” and “battle partner.”

The word *paraclete* was a word also used to describe a soldier’s battle partner in conflict. Soldiers would often stand back-to-back as they fought with swords, guarding and protecting each other. The Holy Spirit is the believer’s battle partner, faithfully standing near at all times, giving power,

and protecting the back or weak areas of one's life (*Knowing the Holy Spirit*, Pathway Press. 197, 198).

## Five Steps To Personalizing the Spirit

**1. Do not quench the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19).** To quench means to smother, to put out. You can quench the Holy Spirit by ignoring Him, by pretending He's not there. You can quench the Spirit by covering Him with wrong attitudes and superfluous busyness. You can quench the Spirit by extinguishing His presence through pride or arrogance.

**2. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30).** The meaning of the Greek word for *grieve* denotes the emotions of a betrayed spouse. It depicts the feelings of hurt, rejection, shame and extreme disappointment. These are the emotions felt by the Holy Spirit when we grieve Him. Further, it means don't lie to, abuse, sin against, wound or use for selfish motives. Things that grieve the Spirit are listed in vv. 25-31. They include lying, uncontrolled anger, giving place to the devil, stealing, negative talk, bitterness, harsh words and slander.

**3. Be led by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14).** Paul emphasized that to be led by the Spirit is to be, first and foremost, filled with the Spirit: "Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). Don't be under the influence of wine, he says, but under the leadership of the Spirit. Refuse to be led by your emotions! Refuse to be manipulated by the temporary and the sensational.

**4. Walk in the Spirit (Romans 8:1).** A person's lifestyle is to be Spirit-led. The Holy Spirit is One who "comes alongside" the believer, so we are to keep in step with Him. When we walk in the Spirit, we walk *with Him*, in Him and *by Him*.

**5. Practice the presence of the Holy Spirit.** You do this by exercising your senses.

“Everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:13, 14).

My prayer for you is that you will not put the Holy Spirit in a box. Speaking in tongues as the Holy Spirit gives the utterance is beautiful. Good traditions preserve and present truths to coming generations. Temperament is our unique expression of personhood. The “temple” is an important place in which people gather for worship and to hear the Word.

But the Holy Spirit transcends all!

Personalize Him! “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Romans 8:14).