



ROAD

TO

PENTECOST

BY DAN SCOTT & HUNTER MOBLEY

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INTRODUCTION

FOR MANY CHRISTIANS, Easter Sunday punctuates the liturgical calendar—a calendar that annually rehearses the great events of Jesus' life from Advent to Easter. We eat our remaining peeps, put away the egg dye, and settle down to ordinary time until Advent circles again, forgetting to celebrate two great events: Christ's ascension into Heaven and Pentecost.

Christ Church, as a three streams congregation, is learning to walk in the full expression of liturgical, evangelical, and Pentecostal (also known as charismatic) life, but we cannot escape our birthing and historical identification in the Pentecostal stream. Our institutional DNA is made up of a rich history of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Pentecostalism, as culture, has a complicated history. Those of us with experience in the Pentecostal stream know well that the promise of the Holy Spirit's prophetic revelation has been dangerously tempting to many a clerical charlatan. But, in spite of human marring of what God meant for good, Pentecostalism as theology and practice, is alive and well. The same Holy Spirit that visited the believers at Pentecost is the same Holy Spirit that visits us today. The church still has need for every gift that the Holy Spirit gives.

At Christ Church, we're not bound by the cultural elements of traditional American Pentecostalism—though we love many of them, particularly the wonderful songs. Much deeper than cultural expression, we are determined to stand behind the theology that the Holy Spirit moves through the church giving some a word in tongues and others an interpretation. Some a word of knowledge and others a prophecy.

Many of you have found that experience in the Pentecostal stream has been nothing but winsome and wonderful. However, some of you feel burned out, burned over, and burned up. And still others of you are totally unfamiliar with the culture, theology, and practice of Pentecostal belief. But for all of us—*truly, all of us*—the Holy Spirit breathes invitation.

The Holy Spirit invites us to open our hearts to receive all that He would give us.

The Holy Spirit invites us to push the reset button on our expectation of what a Spirit-filled life is all about.

Finally, the Holy Spirit invites us to a renewal and deepening of His gifts.



This book is meant to be a devotional tool as we journey from Easter to Pentecost. There are weekly meditations to supplement our time with God each week between Sundays. There are also several brief articles focused on the Holy Spirit that you may find useful as we, together, prepare our hearts for Pentecost.

Our prayer is that as a church family we will see the Holy Spirit fill us with gifts and graces of His presence.

Consecrate this season with us as a season of expectation—a Holy Spirit advent—as we walk together on the Road to Pentecost.

—Dan Scott & Hunter Mobley, Epiphany 2015



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

WEEK 1: THE ETERNAL PRESENCE

THE HOLY SPIRIT, as an eternal member of the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—has existed since the very beginning. The Bible first mentions the Holy Spirit in Genesis as the dynamic source of creation brooding over the waters, stirring the pot, preparing the way for life.

The Old Testament, beyond the creation narrative in Genesis, is filled with references to the Holy Spirit, including:

Isaiah's prophecy that the Holy Spirit would transform the wilderness into a paradise, a place for justice and righteousness (Isaiah 32:15);

The Holy Spirit as the source for Bezalel's creative ability to build the tabernacle (Exodus 31:23); and

The prophet Joel's promise that a day would come when the Holy Spirit would not be reserved for the priests, prophets, kings, and judges, but would be poured out on all people (Joel 2:28).

The New Testament, even before the Pentecost moment in Jerusalem's upper room, bears witness to the dynamic work of Holy Spirit, including:

The Holy Spirit as the presence that overshadowed Mary at the conception of Jesus (Luke 1:35);

The Holy Spirit's resting on Jesus—the spirit-anointed one—at his baptism (John 1:29-34); and

Paul's statement in Romans that the Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead (Romans 8:11).

As we prepare our hearts for Pentecost, let's remember that the Holy Spirit is eternal. The Scriptures are filled with references to the Holy Spirit's work throughout the history of God's family.

Just as the Holy Spirit has been working and moving before God's family had a name for Him, the Holy Spirit has been working in our lives before we could call His name. The Holy Spirit always moves first.

Father, thank you for the eternal presence of the Holy Spirit. We celebrate the work of the Holy Spirit throughout Scripture. We receive the eternal presence and the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in our church. Send it on down!



WEEK 2: THE INDWELLING PRESENCE

THE HOLY SPIRIT plays a significant role in a believer's life. John wrote that the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, guides people into truth, and draws believers to Christ (John 16:8; 16:13). Therefore, apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, we would have no awareness of our sin. Repentance is only possible through the initiation of the Holy Spirit. In this way, the Holy Spirit is the first *mover* when a person comes to faith. The Holy Spirit moves toward us and in response we move toward Him.

Once a person submits to God, repents from sin, and puts their hope for salvation in Christ, the Holy Spirit moves in to stay. The Holy Spirit is given to everyone who believes in Jesus (John 7:39). Paul writes that our bodies are temples for the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19).

This is big news! If we belong to Christ, the Holy Spirit lives inside of us. We can never be separated from the Holy Spirit.

Because the Holy Spirit lives inside of us, the Holy Spirit is constantly communicating with us. Scripture tells us that:

The Holy Spirit assures us that we are God's children
(Romans 8:16);

The Holy Spirit prays for us (Romans 8:26);

The Holy Spirit directs us in the choices we should make (Acts 20:22);

The Holy Spirit warns us when physical or spiritual danger is present (Acts 20:23); and

The Holy Spirit is our source for sanctification—making us more and more like Jesus every day (Titus 3:5).

We are prone to forget that the Holy Spirit lives inside of us. In every place that we decide to go, in every word we choose to say, and in every decision that we make, we carry the Holy Spirit with us.

Because we are hosts for the Holy Spirit, we have a great advantage. We have God inside of us praying for us, knowing our every thought, directing us, warning us about danger, making us good. But just because the Holy Spirit speaks to us doesn't always mean that we hear. Just because the Holy Spirit warns us doesn't always mean that we listen. We have to yield our lives to the Holy Spirit's work. We have to open our hearts and minds to receive help from the Holy Spirit—help that He promises to deliver.

Father, thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Help us to open our hearts and minds to the ever-present fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit, please continue to intercede for us, direct us, warn us, and make us holy.



WEEK 3: FILLED TO FULLNESS

THE HOLY SPIRIT is the giver of spiritual gifts. In the modern era, Christians have described the Holy Spirit's distribution of spiritual gifts—gifts like knowledge, discernment, tongues, healing, etc.—as a *filling of the Spirit* or a *baptism of the Spirit*. The language we use is much less important than the actual experiences that the language describes.

Jesus said to his followers: “If you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask” (Luke 11:13). Jesus invites us to ask the Father for more of the Holy Spirit.

Why would we want more of the Holy Spirit? Paul writes that more of the Holy Spirit leads to a greater knowledge of God, a greater awareness of what belongs to us through Christ, and a greater operation of resurrection power in our lives (Ephesians 1:15-23).

As we ask the Father for more of the Holy Spirit, we must turn to Jesus' words: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8). The main purpose of the power, filling, gifts, and ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life is *missions!* The Holy Spirit comes to make us into witnesses for Christ. Any spiritual manifestation that does not serve as a witness to the resurrected Christ is a counterfeit spirit.

Gifts of healing, prophecy, words of knowledge, and other dramatic encounters that we may experience through the power of the Holy Spirit should always point to the cross. Jesus, Himself, tells us that the power of the Holy Spirit is a power that transforms us into His witnesses. We should not pray for more of the Holy Spirit if we are not ready to be used by Christ as His witnesses. We cannot expect to be filled by the Holy Spirit if we are not ready to be used in missions.

Father, thank you for the continual work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We ask for more—more of you, more of your gifts, more of your presence. Help us ready our hearts to go on mission for you. We are ready to be your witnesses. Fill us with everything that we need to share the love of Christ with the world.



WEEK 4: OBSTACLES TO FILLING

MANY OF US who pray for the Holy Spirit to fill us to fullness are disappointed when we feel like *nothing happened*. For many years before I began to pray in tongues (see the article later in this book about tongues), I felt disappointed that the work of the Holy Spirit that I saw in others hadn't occurred in me.

Here, we will highlight several of the more common obstacles to the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

But before moving to the common obstacles, let me make three comments to those readers who find themselves disappointed by what feels like unanswered prayers for more of the Holy Spirit. First, there is no formula to the work of the Holy Spirit (remember, this is the part of the Godhead described as a bird, wind, fire, water, and oil!). Second, keep asking. God is honored by our heart for Him. God's work occurs over a long arc in our lives. His timing is perfect. And finally, the real test for the work of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life is whether the fruit of the Holy Spirit is evident, not the gifts of the Holy Spirit. A heart full of love is much more indicative of the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit than tongues of fire.

As we pray for more of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, there are several potential obstacles to watch for that can

block our availability to the Holy Spirit's work and power. These obstacles include:

Lack of submission to God. Obedience is part of the pathway to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. If we're holding back certain areas of our lives from the work of sanctification, we aren't postured to receive more from the Holy Spirit.

Unconfessed sin. Lack of repentance is a signal that we're not really open to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Remember, it's the Holy Spirit that convicts us of sin (John 16:8).

Unwanted gifts. Paul tells us to eagerly desire the gifts of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 14:1). If we are unsure of whether we are open to receiving spiritual gifts from the Holy Spirit, we are not ready for all that the Holy Spirit could do in and through us.

Shame. If you have repented from sin and given your life to Christ, you are a worthy recipient of all the Holy Spirit has to offer. *Period.* The enemy will try to convince you that you aren't worthy of the Holy Spirit's gifts and power, but the enemy is a liar!

Making fun of the Holy Spirit. This might include pretending to speak in tongues.

Getting too close to evil spirits. Watching horror movies, entering into the darker side of Halloween celebrations, playing with Ouija boards, and visiting psychics open us to a spiritual world separate from the Holy Spirit.

So renounce these practices and change your habits to ready yourself for a filling by the Holy Spirit.

Unforgiveness. A heart of unforgiveness places us not only outside of the forgiveness of God but also outside of the work of the Holy Spirit.

If any of these obstacles trigger you, pray that God would help you to ready your heart for the filling of the Holy Spirit. The beginning of a changed life is only a prayer away.

Father, we ask that you would bring to our minds any obstacles that are in the way of the work that the Holy Spirit wants to do in our lives. Ready us for the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.



WEEK 5: AND THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE!

IF YOU HAVE ever gone to the Scriptures to search for what the Bible has to say about the work of the Holy Spirit, you've likely found yourself in I Corinthians 12 and 14. In these two chapters, we learn a good deal about tongues, prophecy, and other dramatic gifts of the Holy Spirit.

If you have ever gone to a wedding, chances are you have heard the famous love passage in Scripture from I Corinthians 13. "Love is patient, love is kind..."

The point here is that I Corinthians 13 is right smack in the middle of I Corinthians 12 and 14. In the midst of very specific teaching about the use of prophecy, tongues, miracles, healings, discernment, and words of knowledge, Paul found it necessary to push the pause button and reflect on the all-important topic of love. By writing about love in the middle of writing about tongues and prophesy, Paul keeps the main thing the main thing.

At the end of the day, everything will pass away except for three things: faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is love (I Corinthians 13:13). Tongues will stop. Prophesy will cease. But love remains forever.

Love is the most important work of the Holy Spirit. Focus on love. Pray that the Holy Spirit would plant all of the gifts inside of you but especially pray that the Holy Spirit would increase your capacity to love God and to love others.

If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing. If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing.

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

Prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will become useless. But love will last forever! Now our knowledge is partial and incomplete, and even the gift of prophecy reveals only part of the whole picture! But when the time of perfection comes, these partial things will become useless.

When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely.

Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love. (I Corinthians 13)

Father, fill us with love. Love for you and love for our neighbors. We pray that you would make us into a people that are known by our love.



WEEK 6: SPEAK, LORD!

HAVE YOU EVER said something like, “I’m not sure whether this message is from the Holy Spirit or whether it’s only the pizza I ate last night?!” *How does the Holy Spirit speak to us?* Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit speaks to us, directs us in the ways to go, warns us of danger, gives us special knowledge, and fills us with discernment. *But how does He do it?* If we know some of the ways that the Holy Spirit can speak to us, we can train our ears to listen.

Below are some of the many ways that the Holy Spirit speaks:

Through Scripture. The Bible is living. As we study the Bible, the Holy Spirit will speak to us through the ancient and timeless words of Scripture.

Through people. The same Holy Spirit that lives inside of you is the same Holy Spirit that lives inside of every believer. As Christian friends and leaders share revelation that they’ve had from the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit inside of you will bear witness to its truth. *A caveat:* Remember that you can experience as much of the Holy Spirit as the greatest Christian leader. Any word of

prophecy or revelation from a Christian friend or leader should be tested. If the prophecy or revelation doesn't immediately confirm something that the Holy Spirit was already communicating to you in some other way, pray for the Lord to help you to discern the message.

Through creation. All of creation is under the authority of God, so He can use it to reveal truth to us.

Through dreams. The prophet Joel wrote that when the spirit fell upon the people, they would dream dreams (Joel 2:28). If you wake up from a dream that feels particularly significant, journal the dream, and pray for the Lord to reveal through the dream what He wants to speak to you.

Through visions. The Book of Acts is full of testimony about visions that the Holy Spirit gave to believers (Acts 7:55-56; 16:9-10; 18:9-10).

Through pictures. Similar to a vision, the Lord might speak to you through an image to which the Holy Spirit applies spiritual understanding. "The Lord gave another message to Jeremiah. He said, 'Go down to the potter's shop, and I will speak to you there.' So I did as he told me and found the potter working at his wheel. But the jar he was making did not turn out as he had hoped, so he crushed it into a lump of clay again and started over. Then the Lord gave me this message: 'O Israel, can I not do to you as this potter has done to his clay? As the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand'" (Jeremiah 18:1-6).

Through voices. It's unusual, but the Lord may speak in a way that appears to you to be audible. The Lord spoke to Samuel (1 Samuel 3:4) and to Paul (Acts 9:4) in a voice that they perceived audibly.

Father, speak to us through your Holy Spirit. Help us to ready our hearts to hear you in every way that you communicate.



WEEK 7: ASK

IF YOU HAVE made it to the last week of this journey, hopefully your relationship with the Holy Spirit has deepened. But you may still be wondering, *How do I receive the filling of the Holy Spirit that leads to walking in spiritual gifts?* The first thing to remember is that there is no magic formula. The gospel and all of its benefits are for everyone. Often the things of God confound the wise but make sense to the simple. So you don't have to know much to be filled to fullness with the Holy Spirit. In fact, you don't have to know anything! The gift of the Holy Spirit is just that...*a gift!*

In spite of the fact that there are no magic formulas, there are some good common-sense things to keep in mind if you are seeking to be filled to fullness with the Holy Spirit.

First, ask! Remember Jesus telling his followers that the Father will always give the Holy Spirit to his children who ask. Don't stop asking. Trust that God will be true to His word. He loves to give away the Holy Spirit!

Second, posture yourself for receiving. Years ago when I was trying to discern whether God was calling me to ministry, a wise spiritual leader counseled me to assume that He was and to get myself ready—otherwise, think what could be lost! The same advice is true

when we're praying for the Holy Spirit. Get stuff out of your life that blocks the Holy Spirit and bring in the things that are pleasing to the Holy Spirit.

Third, keep confessing sin. Unconfessed sin is a roadblock to being filled to fullness with the Holy Spirit. God cannot deny a broken and contrite spirit (Psalm 51:17).

And, finally, keep asking! God is always working, even when you cannot perceive Him. Don't lose heart.

Father, thank you for your promise to fill me with the Holy Spirit. Reveal to me any obstacles that are in my path toward filling, forgive me of my sin, and send the Holy Spirit on down!



PASTOR DAN ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

*He is a fire; He is an awesome Wind
He is God's gift of joy, to all those who let Him in.
He gives us power, to go higher and higher.
He is a flaming flood; He is a fire.*

HE IS A FIRE, DAN SCOTT, EPICLESIS MUSIC

WHEN I WAS a young Pentecostal, doing itinerant ministry from church to church, I would often hold prayer services for those wishing to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I will never forget one service in particular, in my home state of West Virginia. I had been praying for people, going down the line of seekers, laying my hands on them as I went. When I came to one little boy, I laid my hand on him and said gently (as gently as a Pentecostal preacher can!) "Receive the Holy Ghost!" At this, the little boy opened his eyes as far as they would open, bolted for the door, and shouted back at me, "I don't want nut'in to do with no ghost!"

Unfortunately, this is the stance of many adult Christians. *They don't want nut'in to do with no ghost!*

When we call God "Father" we at least have a place to begin as we attempt to imagine God. Even though we know that our heavenly Father must be considerably different than our earthly father, we at

least understand what “father” means. The same is true when we speak of God as “Son.” The term “Son of God,” though beyond our comprehension, is at least picturable. Because of Jesus, we can even give God a human face when we think of the Son. But how do we even begin to speak, write, think about, or comprehend the Holy Spirit?

As I write these words, I admit to you that I find it difficult to write about the Holy Spirit. He seems to elude all of our descriptions. Perhaps the most important reason for this difficulty of description is that one does not so much study the Holy Spirit as experience Him. He is a Fire; mere words cannot contain Him.

In *The Sound of Music* we learned that “starting at the very beginning is a very good place to start.” So let's start there.

In chapter one of Genesis—about as close to the very beginning as we can get—we are told that “the Spirit of God moved over the face of the waters.” I once read a rabbi's commentary on this passage that said that we should think of incubation and fertilization, as when a hen sits on her eggs. He said that the writer of Genesis seems to picture the Spirit hovering over the primal stuff that was just about ready to be brought into existence. This would not be the last time the Spirit would be depicted in this way in the Bible. The mention of the Holy Spirit in Scripture is nearly always linked with a creative act, some great change, some sort of transformation.

The Old Testament uses wind, fire, breath, water and oil to describe the Holy Spirit. The writers usually invoke these symbols whenever God is about to do something new, unexplainable, powerful, and uncontrollable. Notice how all of these things are unstable, uncontrollable things. They are all difficult to hold and define.

Let's look at a couple of examples. The prophet Ezekiel tells about a vision in which the Wind of God revives a field of dead bodies. He goes through great lengths to tell us that all the organization of the body parts, even the reformation of skin upon the bodies, only filled the valley with corpses. Then the prophet was told to prophesy to the

Wind. It was then that the bodies began to breathe and to stand up to become a great army.

At the annunciation (when the angel told Mary she would be the mother of Messiah), the angel told Mary, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you; and the power of the Highest will overshadow you” (Luke 1:35). And so we confess in the Apostle’s Creed that our Lord was “conceived by the Holy Spirit.” Once again, we encounter the Spirit acting at the birth of something new and mysterious, something world-changing and uncontrollable.

When Jesus is about to go into Heaven, He takes His disciples to the town of Bethany. He breathes on them and says, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22)

St. Luke, as he writes the Acts of The Apostles, mentions the Holy Spirit again and again, usually in connection with the spreading of the gospel. He tells us in chapters one and two that it was the Holy Spirit who brought power to the Church for evangelism and guidance. He tells us that the Holy Spirit intervenes with power as Satan attempts to hinder the work of God’s people. The Spirit pushes and prods. He opens doors and breaks bonds. He guides the human players on the earth as they attempt to do the work their master asked them to do.

In the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation, St. John sees the Holy Spirit wooing creation back to its Creator. In the final passages of that book, John hears the Church joining her voice with the Holy Spirit to invite all people everywhere to come and meet the living God. “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life” (Revelation 22:17).

Perhaps the little boy’s reaction to the “Holy Ghost” was not so far off, after all! For the Holy Spirit is the voice of God, He haunts the deepest parts of our being! He moves through creation creating, mysteriously calling, and purposefully guiding toward God all who

will follow. He is the divine witness within the human heart who will not let us rest until we find our rest in the Living God. How do we relate to such an uncontrollable, undefinable being?

We must get over our fear and walk with confidence toward the uncertainty that the Spirit is sure to bring to our lives. This uncertainty is joy and wonder, recreation, and reformation. Therefore, our personal regeneration begins with the work of the Spirit (John 3). No man can even come to God except the Spirit draw him (I Corinthians 2:11). Our very desire to respond to the gospel is the gift of God and a result of the Holy Spirit's work (Ephesians 2:1-10). All believers have the Holy Spirit at work in them because "no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit" (I Corinthians 12:3).

In other words, from our first encounter with God to our final beatitude in glory, the Holy Spirit is our comforter and personal guide. He assures our "adoption as sons" (Galatians 4:5-6). He gives us an inner witness that we have become God's children (Romans 8:14-16). He reveals truth (John 14:17; 15:2; 16:13). He comforts and teaches (John 14:25; 26). As William Barclay so wonderfully writes, one of the greatest titles of the Holy Spirit is *Paracletus* or Comforter. Barclay tells us that this title is meant to be a deliberate contradiction to one of Satan's titles, *Kategoros* or Accuser. We are supposed to know that Satan's accusing work against us is resisted by the Comforter!

Knowing all of this, *why would we ever run from the Holy Spirit?*

He is the creative force of God. He is God as untamable, indescribable, and unpredictable. He is our divine helper, God living within us and within His church, guiding us toward our constant transformation, preparing us to live eternally in His presence.

We cannot afford to ignore the Holy Spirit. However difficult to describe or understand, Christians are called to confess: "We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who together with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified" (The Nicene Creed).

The Holy Spirit is not the retired author of Scripture! He is alive! He is at work in His Church and in the lives of all believers.



PASTOR DAN ON THE INFILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

SINCE THE MIDDLE of the twentieth century, Christians all over the world have been talking in new ways about the Holy Spirit.

There has been so much disagreement about the Holy Spirit in the Church that words often tend to obscure rather than illuminate. Evangelicals have a problem with the phrase “baptism of the Holy Spirit.” Pentecostals have a problem with the claim that the believer receives the full measure of the Holy Spirit at conversion.

Let’s start our discussion with a statement on the infilling of the Holy Spirit currently in use among some charismatics:

We believe that the baptism or infilling of the Holy Spirit is an endowment of power subsequent to conversion, given by God to anoint the believer for sanctification and evangelism. It is our understanding that the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit are active within the Body of Christ until the coming of the Lord. Furthermore, we believe the development of these charismatic gifts ought to be encouraged under the guidance of local church authorities.

This statement speaks to an expectation of a specific initial filling and subsequent experiences with the Holy Spirit. Charismatics and Pentecostals, as well as a growing number of Christians from a great diversity of backgrounds, claim that the filling of the Holy Spirit is a vital part of their on-going walk with God.

By the time of Christ, Jewish people used the day of Pentecost to remember the giving of the law to Moses on Sinai—every Pentecost they remembered that they were children of covenant. On that day, they rehearsed the events of Sinai for themselves and their children. They pledged themselves again to be the people of God.

God called Israel to be a set-apart people. He called them to serve all the nations of the earth, but they were not to blend into these nations. Israel was supposed to welcome any man or woman who wished to join the people of God.

Every Israelite knew this at the time of Christ. They still know it today. A Jew eats differently. He arranges his calendar differently. He has a different conception of family responsibility. All these things, from generation to generation, give living examples to the world of how covenant people are meant to live.

At the time of Christ, Jews knew that they were a chosen people. But they had also begun to think of themselves as a superior people. They had the law. They had the commandments and ordinances. They had the temple and God-ordained worship. However, they had largely forgot their mission to the rest of the world. They were no longer serving the nations.

Jesus warned the Jews that God was ready to move beyond their borders. He told them that the kingdom of God could be taken from them. But they did not believe it. That is, most did not believe it. Some did. About twenty percent of the Jewish people at the time of Christ and the apostles believed in Christ. This caused a split in Judaism. The first Jewish believers in Christ were called Nazarenes. A few years later, in the city of Antioch, the followers of Christ were called Christians, and the break between the Old and New Covenant

peoples became a great chasm.

In the Christian Church, just as in Judaism before it, the people of God continued to keep a calendar of special events by which they remembered what God had done for His people in the past. This is why most Christian holidays come at the same time as Jewish ones. Christmas grew out of Hanukkah; Easter grew out of Passover; and Pentecost grew out of Pentecost. Most of the time, even the themes are nearly the same. We get our celebration of Holy Communion from the Passover Seder. Go to a Jewish Seder service and then to a liturgical service celebrating Holy Communion, and you will see how similar they are.

Let's say it again. The early believers in Christ were Jews. They were a part of the people of covenant. On the day that we now mark as the birthday of the church, Christian believers, like all of their Jewish brothers and sisters, had come to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost.

Something new emerged, however. Jesus Christ had died and resurrected. He had given His followers the Great Commission. He had gone into heaven. But before He went, He told the disciples to go to Jerusalem and to wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit. They obeyed. Days passed. They prayed. They waited. They sang. They studied and discussed scripture (see Acts 1).

There is no doubt that the believers at that Pentecost celebration believed that the God of covenant was up to something new. He was creating a new expression of the nation of Israel. This renewed nation would not just wait for the people of other nations to become Jews. It would actively go out to convince the nations of their need for God. Israel would become more than a geographical place. Instead, Israel would be a spiritual nation in which individuals of every nation could find a home.

The old nation was born at Sinai. The renewed nation was born in an upper room. The old nation received the law among bolts of lightning. The renewed nation was birthed in tongues of fire. On the first day that the remnant Jews, soon to be called Christians, had

their first official meeting, people were present from every nation around the Mediterranean.

These early believers didn't say, "We are not Jews any more; we have nothing to do with those people." Instead, they went to the temple and respected it as God's house. So the New Covenant was not a rejection of all that the Old Covenant represented. It was rather a renewal of the life of covenant. *That's why it happened on Pentecost.* The Jewish people were still keeping the law. They were still keenly aware that they were Abraham's children. They still taught their children the words of Moses. But the life had drained out of these practices.

Unfortunately, it is not much different for many Christians today. A Christian can have the sacraments and learn the Scriptures, but without the life of the Spirit, it is fruitless. When the Holy Spirit came upon the believers in the upper room, He wasn't saying that Judaism was no good any more—but He *was* saying that some changes had to be made. The old, crusty, dry legalism had to give way to a spirit of joy and voluntary commitment. It was, in that sense, new. Not a new religion, but a new life and a new joy. This is what Pentecost is all about.

Today, most Christians have the right words, the right teachings, the right ceremonies—but they lack life. *We must have the Holy Spirit!*

Many Christian groups teach that one receives the fullness of the Holy Spirit at conversion. However, this simply does not follow the teachings of either Scripture or the history of the Christian Church. The vast majority of Christians who live now or have lived throughout history have believed otherwise. This is why in the Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, and Episcopal Churches, one converts, is later baptized, and then has hands laid on his or her head for confirmation. When one is confirmed, the minister says something similar to, "Receive the grace of the Holy Spirit." Many times, unfortunately, nothing seems to happen; but the ceremony itself points back to a time when it did.

So why does the Holy Spirit come?

Peter Kreeft, in his book *The Angel and the Ants*, quotes an old English writer, William Law: “If you will consider your own self, calmly and at leisure, for but one moment in complete honesty, you must come to the admission that there is one and only one reason why you are not, even now, a saint: you do not wholly want to be.”

William Law puts the matter bluntly. Even those of us who want to be holy do not desire it enough. Nor do we desire holiness for every area of life. *Something is wrong with our hunger for righteousness.* We learn the law of God—and that is essential, by the way. If we plan to be followers of Christ, we cannot be mentally lazy. Every Christian is called to study and reflect on God’s law. Then we try to carry out what we have learned. *But what happens?* St. Paul said it a long time ago, “The things I wish to do, I don’t do; the things I don’t wish to do I find myself doing” (Romans 7:15)! *Why is that?* Because we have two sets of desires in our hearts. One set of desires says, “Do the right thing; live by God’s rules.” The other set of desires says, “Please yourself; don’t pay attention to that old out-of-date stuff.” Many times, as we all know, the wrong set of desires wins out.

The Holy Spirit comes in power and glory to bring aid to the right set of desires. He brings us the power we need to live a holy life. The Holy Spirit is not a force that comes to help us perform electrifying party tricks. The Holy Spirit is God Himself who comes to help us become holy (Ephesians 5:15-20).

And one of the great signs of the Holy Spirit’s presence is joy.

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.’ (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)” (John 7:37-39).

People who have been filled with the Holy Spirit know what we mean when we speak of the joy that God pours on the soul of the believer who asks for the Holy Spirit. It truly is *joy unspeakable and*

full of glory. The poor people of the earth, who have no promise of shelter or food for tomorrow, sing and dance from the joy of the Holy Spirit.

As many believers can testify, when the Holy Spirit comes in power and glory into a believer's life, the Holy Scripture comes alive. Jesus said that this would happen: "When He the Spirit of Truth has come, He will lead you into all truth" (John 16:13). The baptism of the Holy Spirit doesn't take away our need to study (II Timothy 2:15). Instead, the Holy Spirit gives us a love for Scripture and He illuminates it for our use.

Jesus told us why the infilling of the Holy Spirit was so important: "You shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The Lord's command is to take the message of covenant to all the peoples of the earth, and to invite them in! That's a big task—an impossible one, really. However, we are not working with our own talents and energy alone. We are working with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit moves as He pleases, and we cannot always predict exactly how He will come to any particular individual. We know that He comes to every believer, for it is impossible to believe at all without His enabling grace. We also know, however, that the Holy Spirit visits every believer in a special way. This is why the writer of the Book of Acts noticed that something was amiss with the believers at Ephesus. Paul asked them, "Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed" (Acts 19:2)? Also the Apostle John wrote these words concerning the Holy Spirit before Pentecost, "He spoke this of the Holy Spirit which was not yet given because Christ was not yet glorified" (John 7:38-39).

One does not have to be a Pentecostal or charismatic to recognize that all believers should become acquainted with the Holy Spirit in a personal way.

In the Book of Acts, the Holy Spirit was often accompanied by a

supernatural sign. Usually this was the gift of tongues. Classical Pentecostals have used this fact to insist that all who receive the infilling of the Holy Spirit necessarily speak with tongues. But surely that is stretching the Bible to say what it simply does not say. It is enough to say that all should be open to this or to any other biblical sign that the Holy Spirit uses to demonstrate His presence.

The believer should ask the Father for the Holy Spirit. Our Lord said it this way:

So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him! (Luke 11:9-13)

Once we ask for the Holy Spirit, we worship and wait. There will be a moment in prayer when we begin to sense the Lord leading us to release ourselves to Him. The Book of Romans tells us this:

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. (Romans 8:26-27)

When we run out of words and thoughts, the Spirit can begin to flow through us in a way that is deeper than words and thoughts. We may sigh, be struck silent, dance, weep, sing, speak in tongues,

or simply become deeply aware that God has touched us in a new and powerful way. Whatever the particular manifestation, we will know that God has visited us. There will be a lingering sense of sweetness and glory. We will notice both a deeper desire to read the Scripture and a growing boldness to witness to unbelievers. There will be a marked awareness of the supernatural tools God gives to believers to carry out His work.



PASTOR HUNTER ON SPEAKING IN TONGUES

LET'S PUT IT on the table—speaking in tongues is controversial business. Maybe you're like me and you were raised in a cessationist tradition (e.g., Southern Baptist) and you were taught that the whole tongues business was just for the first batch of believers, to sort of get them on their feet and establish the church. As the cessationist theory goes, now we have the Scriptures, the creeds, and two thousand years of church history... so the Holy Spirit limits his work to these modes.

Others reading this book come from Pentecostal traditions that put speaking in tongues on an elevated pedestal: a ritual of initiation determining whether or not you are “in the club.” Still others among us are new to the faith or come from Christian traditions that avoided certain passages in I Corinthians and Acts where tongues were mentioned.

To me, speaking in tongues has been one of the most confusing areas of devotional life. What's it for? How does it happen? What if it doesn't happen? And I've found that there is very little taught in most churches—including my own—about this gift of the Holy Spirit. Truthfully, it's just easier to avoid the whole subject. But, here, we'll dive in. If Scripture discusses it, the Holy Spirit offers it, and the church practices it—then we should better know something about it.

Before I truly dive in, two disclaimers.

First, this is my take on what the Bible teaches about tongues. I'm not an expert. I've spent most of my Christian life confused about the whole matter. I didn't go to divinity school—I went to law school! So, if you disagree with all of this or still have questions... call Jack Hayford!

There is considerable disagreement about tongues within the church. For this reason and because the Bible doesn't lay out a step by step road map for tongues, I believe that tongues can be a wonderful, wonderful part of the devotional life of a believer. But I don't believe that we can make a law out of any interpretation of the passages in the Bible discussing tongues. The motto of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church is, "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, charity." Personally, I put tongues in the "non-essentials" category. I wouldn't break fellowship with any Christian over the matter of tongues. However, I believe the invitation to participate in tongues through the grace of the Holy Spirit is a sweet one.

A second disclosure—a personal one. I pray in tongues. Pretty regularly. This began in March of 2012 at a charismatic prayer meeting in my friend's home. I didn't lose my mind or get swept into a trance. I decided to open my mouth, begin to form a word and see if the Holy Spirit would do the rest. First came a syllable, then a few more. Days later, something like a sentence emerged. Years later, it's something like a primitive language. I do all of this privately. I haven't ever spoken in tongues publicly in a church setting (more about that later). Praying in tongues is an incredibly rich part of my devotional life. When it happens, I know the syllables I'm saying. I have all my wits about me. I choose to pray in tongues. I control it—though I don't believe I've created the syllables and words myself. I'm not sure what I'm saying but I believe that I'm interceding in prayer in a deeper way than my natural words can do.

Alright, let's jump further in.

It appears to me that the Bible bears witness to a single gift—

speaking in tongues—with two uses: one use for public witness and another use for private devotion. Let's discuss each use in turn.

First, speaking in tongues as public witness. Paul writes that speaking in tongues is a sign to the unbeliever as someone speaks the word of God in their own language (I Corinthians 14:22). It's easy to see the missional use of this form of speaking in tongues, right? You find yourself in the company of someone who doesn't speak your language, and the Holy Spirit mysteriously graces you with the ability to speak about God in that person's language. They're amazed and realize that God must really be drawing them to Himself.

My friend Scott travels as the tour manager for a professional musician. In one city, a lady who seemed crazy was bothering the musicians as they made their way from the concert hall to the tour bus. The lady was taunting the singers and causing a ruckus. Scott, newly filled with the Holy Spirit, sensed that something spiritual was amiss with the lady. He went over with the intention of speaking to her. But when Scott approached the lady, he felt led to pray. He began to pray in tongues out loud (he confesses that this is not a typical practice of his, but it somehow seemed right in the moment). The lady stopped talking immediately. When he finished, the lady, stunned, told Scott that he had been speaking to her in her native language about the things of God. Scott was just as amazed as she.

With the use of speaking in tongues as public witness, Paul says that when it's done in front of the church, it must be paired with an interpretation (I Corinthians 14:27). Much of I Corinthians 14 deals with the way that speaking in tongues publicly in church should happen.

This sort of speaking in tongues (as public witness) is what is going on in the original filling of the Holy Spirit narrative in Acts 2: "And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability. At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by

the believers. They were completely amazed. “How can this be?” they exclaimed. These people are all from Galilee, and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages” (Acts 2:4-8)!

Let’s move now to the second use for speaking in tongues: speaking in tongues as prayer language. In I Corinthians 14:2, Paul writes that if you speak in tongues, you will be talking only to God—you will be speaking by the power of the Spirit, but it will all be mysterious. Alright, let’s stop here for a moment. This feels like we’re now talking about something different from the speaking in tongues that Paul describes as happening publicly in church and paired with an interpretation, right? Here, Paul is telling us that when we are speaking in tongues we’ll be speaking only to God, no one will understand us, and we’ll be speaking mysteries. In the Acts 2 passage described above, people understood what was being said in tongues—the tongue was the native language of the hearer and an unknown language of the speaker. Later, Paul writes that a person who speaks in tongues is strengthened personally, but one who speaks a word of prophecy strengthens the entire church (I Corinthians 14:4). Again, this seems to refer to a more private use of tongues than the public use that we discussed earlier.

The most convincing passage, to me, delineating between these two uses of speaking in tongues comes in I Corinthians 14:

For anyone who speaks in tongues should pray also for the ability to interpret what has been said. For if I pray in tongues, my spirit is praying, but I don’t understand what I am saying. What then shall I do? I will pray in the spirit and I will also pray in words I understand. I will sing in the spirit and I will also sing in words I understand. For if you praise God only in the spirit, how can those who don’t understand you praise God along with you? How can they join you in giving thanks when they don’t understand what you are saying? You will be giving

thanks very well, but it won't strengthen the people who hear you. I thank God that I speak in tongues more than any of you. But in a church meeting I would rather speak five understandable words to help others than ten thousand words in an unknown language. Dear brothers and sisters, don't be childish in your understanding of these things (I Corinthians 14:13-20a).

A slow, careful reading of this passage appears to support a distinction between speaking in tongues as public witness and speaking in tongues as private devotion. At the beginning and ending of the passage, Paul describes speaking in tongues as public witness when he says that if you speak in tongues, you should pray for the ability to interpret what has been said, and that he would rather speak five understandable words in a church service than ten thousand words in tongues. But, between these two parts of the passage, Paul writes that when we pray in tongues our spirit is praying! He says that we do well when to praise God in the 'spirit' (here, I believe, including 'tongues').

Reasonable people draw different conclusions about the implications of the passage above, but personally, I believe that it supports two distinct uses for speaking in tongues: as public witness and as devotional prayer and praise language. Tongues as public witness should be limited, performed in orderly circumstances, and not prized above other prophetic and teaching giftings. Tongues as private devotional language is a valuable way for our spirit to pray. We should pray in tongues and pray in words of understanding. We should praise in tongues and praise in words of understanding. *Both-and* not *either-or*.

And if you're beginning to think that Paul is the only guy with anything to say about tongues, Jude writes that believers ought to pray in the Holy Spirit—this will keep us safe in God's love (Jude 1:20). In Ephesians, we learn that we ought to pray in the Holy Spirit at all times and on every occasion (Ephesians 6:18).

The final passage that convinced me that the Bible bears witness

to two uses of the same gift is Paul's comment in I Corinthians 14:28 that "if no one is present who can interpret, they must be silent in your church meeting and speak in tongues to God privately." Surely, here we can see that there are two appropriate uses for the same gift—publicly as witness to unbelievers and privately to God in our devotional life.

There are two uses for the same gift. The gift of speaking in tongues may be expressed publicly or privately. Many more believers experience the private use of speaking in tongues than the public use. However, because the giver of the gift is the same regardless of the use, we—who experience the gift privately—should remain available, like my friend, Scott, to the gift being used publicly.

We are invited through the witness of Scripture to pray for the gift of speaking in tongues. When we pray for this gift, it often first shows up devotionally as private prayer in tongues to God. However, we should be available for the gift to be used publicly as well—but always in keeping with the restraint and order described in I Corinthians 14. Many of us who have received the gift from the Holy Spirit of speaking in tongues will go our whole life without employing the gift in a public setting.

Paul doesn't make a law of speaking in tongues. In I Corinthians 13, he makes sure to not edify the gift above what he describes as the greater things—love and prophesy. But, the invitation remains for us to seek the gift. If we receive the gift, it may be used infrequently in a public setting as God leads; but, we may access it every moment of every day as part of our private devotional life.

If you're asking God for the gift, a final word of encouragement: Open your mouth! God likely isn't going to physically open your lips and make words emerge. The Holy Spirit gives the language, but you do the speaking. Pray for the gift, believe God will honor your prayer (remember, how much the Father is eager to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask!), and open your mouth and begin to speak. And see

if the Holy Spirit would give you a syllable or word. God isn't afraid of a sincere heart experimenting with devotional life. You can't "get it wrong." If your heart is clear, you can "try it on."

In I Corinthians 12, Paul writes that not everyone will speak in tongues (I Corinthians 12:29-31). This means that not every believer will speak in tongues as public witness or part of their private devotional life. So, Paul doesn't allow us to make a law out of the whole thing. He explicitly tells us that not everyone who belongs to God will do it. And because it's the same gift with two potential uses, I don't believe his statement that not all will speak in tongues refers only to the public use of speaking in tongues, as some classical Pentecostals believe in their making a law for salvation out of the private devotional use of tongues. But, even if it's not a requirement, it's clearly described as something that is useful and wonderful. So why wouldn't we seek it! Remember, God loves to give away the Holy Spirit.

One final word about tongues, in the spirit of getting it all out on the table. *What language is tongues?* Is it an actual native language spoken by some people group on the earth or is it a made-up language of God that no one has ever spoken? The answer is...*both-and!* In Acts 2, it's clear that the tongues spoken were actual languages known by the hearer but unknown by the speaker. But in I Corinthians 13:1, Paul writes, "But if I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but don't have love, I'm a noisy gong." In this passage, Paul appears to lend support to the idea that it is possible to not only speak in a language of earth but also a language of angels when speaking in tongues.

At the end of the day, there is much mystery in it all. Many of us began speaking in tongues before we were able to adequately exegete I Corinthians 12, 13, and 14. This summary is not meant to add "headiness" or confusion to those who already enjoy the practice of speaking in tongues. Rather, I hope to have offered some linear explanation of how those among us who are still searching for truth

in the debate might think about speaking in tongues.

If you're still lost in the mud on the topic, pray. Pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal truth to you. And rest assured, you're in good company. "You will seek me and find me when you search for me with your whole heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).



PASTOR HUNTER ON PROPHECY

ASIDE FROM SPEAKING in tongues, prophecy is probably the most misunderstood component of Christian life. Prophecy is a wonderful and serious gift. Wonderful because it's an incarnational way that God continues to speak to his children *through* His children. Serious because the duty to deliver a message on behalf of God to another person is a sobering one. Was it really God speaking? Is this really what God meant to say? Is it possible that this is just all in my head? These are the honest and important questions that we wrestle with when the Holy Spirit fills us with the gift of prophecy.

When I was in college—during my pre-charismatic experience days—my roommate asked me to join him on a Friday night meeting at his church. *Church on a Friday night?! I should have known I was in trouble.* When I arrived, I learned that the church had invited a prophet to minister during the service. All of this was totally foreign to me. And, as these things go, the prophet called me out during the service, had me come up on stage, and proceeded to deliver publicly a prophetic word about my life. As an aside, I'm not totally opposed to this sort of public prophesy, but it's fraught with peril and requires much spiritual maturity on the part of all involved to be done healthily and appropriately. The prophet said a lot about me that night. Some of it sounded incredible, like I was going to be on top of the

world. But there were other things he said that night that inspired fear and dread in me that would remain for years.

Recently, I was in a meeting at church and a mature believer came to me privately. She told me that she believed God had spoken to her about my life. She wondered if she might share it privately with me. When she delivered the word, it was encouraging and meant to build up my spirit.

Both examples are ways that the Holy Spirit can use a prophetic gifting in individuals. I believe that both the prophet at the college church meeting and the lady who approached me at church had legitimately been given a gift of prophecy by the Holy Spirit, but one used the gift in an uninformed and dangerous way while the other exhibited a mature and humble spirit in delivering the message.

It is vitally important that we inform ourselves with Biblical teaching about the gift of prophecy. Let's know what the Bible offers us to know about this special gift so that we can walk in prophecy with joy and safety.

Paul gives special attention to the gift of prophecy. He says that love should be our highest goal but that we should also desire the special gifts of the Holy Spirit—especially the ability to prophesy (I Corinthians 14:1). Paul singles out prophesy because of how particularly encouraging it can be in the context of a church.

A concept that is familiar to most Protestants is the “priesthood of the believer.” As Protestants, we hang our hat on Peter’s words that “you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What’s more, you are his holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God” (I Peter 2:5). Now that Christ has died and resurrected, we can all stand before God, through placing our lives in the merciful hands of Jesus. We no longer need a priest to stand between us and God. Unfortunately, this concept has been overstretched to convince many of us that we no longer have any need for a priest, which is untrue. We are still in need of priests to shepherd us in the ways of God and to care for our

souls. But we no longer need a priest to stand between us and God to deliver salvation's sacrifice.

In the same way that the sacrifice of Christ ushered in the era of "the priesthood of the believer," the sending of the Holy Spirit ushered in the era of the "prophethood of the believer." If the Holy Spirit, which is God himself, lives inside of me, there is an ability through the grace of the Holy Spirit for the veil between this world and the next to be thinned enough for me to peek through to see something of the world to come. We all have access to the spirit of prophecy through the Holy Spirit. We can all speak to God. We can all hear from God. We're all invited to be His messengers. *The prophethood of the believer.*

Diving further into I Corinthians 14, Paul articulates three purposes of prophecy...

To strengthen others;

To encourage others; and

To comfort others (I Corinthians 14:3).

Did you catch those? They're all good things! *Strengthen, encourage, comfort.* Notice words that Paul does not mention in this passage, words like rebuke, reproach, condemn, warn, etc. It is important for us to know that the spirit of prophecy which is delivered to us by the Holy Spirit is delivered to us to strengthen, encourage, and comfort others. If God reveals something to you and it does not pass the "will it strengthen, encourage, or comfort" test, STOP. Don't deliver the word just yet. Pray and ask the Lord to help you to understand what He would have you do with the revelation. Ask a pastor to help you judge the word and determine in the community of the local church whether it's to be delivered. There are two other gifts of the Holy Spirit—discernment and knowledge—that can feel like prophesy but these gifts are often not meant to be shared publicly with others. Discernment and knowledge gifts are often meant to move us to intercede. Not everything that God reveals to you is meant to be shared. Some things are revealed so that you will intercede in prayer.

Prophecy is meant to operate in the context of a local church. If the Holy Spirit gives you the gift of prophecy, submit yourself to the leaders of your local church. Paul puts the responsibility on the church to evaluate and judge prophesy (I Corinthians 14:29). Prophecy is a gift to a community.

What if you are the recipient of a word of prophecy? If the word immediately resonates with you and confirms something that you already knew to be true or something that God has spoken to you in another way, praise God! It sounds like you have just been graced by God to hear an encouraging word delivered by God through the implanted gift of the Holy Spirit in your brother or sister. If, however, the word doesn't immediately mean much to you, don't sweat it. Pray that the Lord would give you an open heart to receive anything that God might be communicating to you, and move on. Paul wrote, "Our knowledge is partial and incomplete, and even the gift of prophecy reveals only part of the whole picture! But when the time of perfection comes, these partial things will become useless" (I Corinthians 13:9-10). It very well could be that the word is incomplete. If you can't get the word off your mind, take it to a spiritual leader to judge it with you (I Corinthians 14:29).

Remember that the Holy Spirit lives inside of you. If someone believes that the Holy Spirit has spoken to them with a word for you, you have the very same access to the Holy Spirit. They don't have something that you don't have. They may have the gift of prophecy and you may not, but you have the same Holy Spirit. You can ask the Holy Spirit in you to speak to you about what the Holy Spirit in them has said. *It should be the same!* If it's not, leave the prophetic word behind.

You might be thinking, *is it worth all the heartache and worry? Wouldn't it be better to just stay away from the gift of prophecy so as not to worry whether the sharing is appropriate?* According to the Bible, the gift of prophecy is one of the greatest ways that the Holy

Spirit can work within the church. We want to embrace all that the Holy Spirit would put in us; but we want to embrace His gifts with maturity! In speaking about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Paul wrote, “Dear brothers and sisters, don’t be childish in your understanding of these things. Be innocent as babies when it comes to evil, but be mature in understanding matters of this kind” (I Corinthians 14:20).



WAITING IN THE SILENCE

YOU MAY HAVE begun this Road to Pentecost season praying for the Holy Spirit to fill you to fullness with His gifts and His power...and *crickets*. And seven weeks later, armed with new knowledge about the work of the Holy Spirit, you may be seeking a new filling of the Holy Spirit's presence...and *crickets*.

The most difficult part of the Christian path is waiting on God in the silence. *Where are you God? Are you not hearing me? Are you even there? Is something wrong with me?* We all ask these questions in different seasons of our lives.

There are no easy answers to why some of us wait in what seems to be hopeless silence for God to fill us, fix us, and find us. I am waiting on God to fix some things in me and I'm not sure why He's stalling. I spent several years praying late each night for the Holy Spirit to give me the gift of speaking in tongues. I'm still praying for the gift of healing.

At the end of the day, we eagerly desire the spiritual gifts but we cultivate the fruit of the spirit in our lives. As we wait for prophecy, tongues, and miracles, we do our part to put on love...

And joy...

And peace...

And patience...

And kindness...
And goodness...
And faithfulness...
And gentleness...
And self-control.

“The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter to the light of the full day” (Proverbs 4:18).



2015 PENTECOST WEEKEND EVENTS

HOLY SPIRIT RETREAT HOSTED BY REV. PHILLIP JONES

Saturday, May 23 • 9AM-2PM

Wallace Chapel

SPECIAL SPEAKER REV. PHILLIP JONES

Sunday, May 24 • 10:30AM-12PM

Sanctuary

MEMORIAL DAY PICNIC

Sunday, May 24 • 4PM-7PM

Montelle Lane Green Space

