

## 2. What Does the Holy Spirit Do?

### Be Filled With The Holy Spirit

In our previous study on the Holy Spirit, *Who is the Holy Spirit*, we considered the thought that the Holy Spirit is not an "it" or "the force," as in the popular *Star Wars* movies, we concluded that He is a person who thinks, feels, speaks, and is grieved as a person does. We learned that He is fully God, empowers us, and makes the Scriptures come alive to His people. When thinking of the Holy Spirit, many Christians immediately think of His power and the gifts that He imparts, and that is part of His work; however, in this study, we will look at what the Holy Spirit does for the believer when people repent and trust in Christ for salvation. In a later study in this series, we'll look at the gifts the Holy Spirit gives. First, let's talk about the relationship into which all believers are brought.

### Sons and Daughters of God

A man named Nicodemus (a member of the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of all Jews worldwide) and principal teacher of the Jews came to Jesus at night with questions on his mind.

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to Spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (John 3:5-8).

Why would a man like Nicodemus come to Jesus at night? (v. 2). Even though Nicodemus was a ruling elder and scholar, he sought answers from Jesus. What do you think he was searching for, along with millions of people worldwide? What are the big questions that people face?

Nicodemus was aware of an inner need not met by rule-based religion. Jesus was saying that physical birth is not enough. We need to be born again, or born from above, by the Holy Spirit, which happens when we believe the Good News and place our trust in Christ. You may not remember the exact moment that peace with God came to your inner man, your soul, but just as we know we are alive physically, we should know we are alive spiritually.

We receive complete forgiveness when we repent (change our mind concerning the direction of our lives), come to Christ, and put our faith in what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross. The barrier of sin that separated us from God has been taken away. The Old Testament prophet Isaiah writes: "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2). Paul the Apostle writes: "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). Jesus took all our past, present, and future sins and buried them in the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19). The book of Romans is described by scholars as the Himalayas of the New Testament, with chapter eight being Mount Everest, and verses 14-17 could well be defined as the peak of Everest.

<sup>14</sup>For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. <sup>15</sup>The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; instead, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

<sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. <sup>17</sup>Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory (Romans 8:14-17).

**Highest Privilege.** First, there is no higher privilege than being a child of God. We have been brought into God's kingdom through the substitutionary death of Christ on our behalf. John the apostle wrote about this privilege as He describes how we are brought into the family of God when we place our trust in Christ:

<sup>1</sup>See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. <sup>2</sup>Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:1-2).

Under Roman law, if an adult wanted an heir, he could choose one of his sons or adopt a son. God has only one begotten Son, the Lord Jesus, but He has many adopted sons. A reigning monarch adopts waifs and strays in a fairy tale and makes them princes, but in Christ, the fairy tale has become a solid fact. In the passage above, John the Apostle writes that we have been adopted into God's family. There can be no higher honor or privilege. Once we know our status as adopted sons and daughters of God, we realize no status in the world compares to being a child of the Creator of the Universe.

**Closest Intimacy.** Secondly, Paul the Apostle writes in Romans 8 that we have the closest possible intimacy with God, saying that by the Spirit, we cry, "Abba, Father!" Nowhere in the Old Testament is God addressed as *Abba*. The use of this word in addressing God was distinctive of Jesus. It is impossible to translate the Aramaic word *Abba*. The nearest equivalent translation is probably "dear Father" or "Daddy." Many of us have grown up as Christians and are familiar with the term "Abba" as talking about God as Father. However, most of us need to realize how radical a statement it is. Allow me to tell you the story of how life-changing the name *Abba, or Father*, was for a young Muslim man living in Egypt:

Mohammad Kamel was a devout Muslim who decided to persecute a church in a city in Egypt. He asked his Christian friend, Mamdouh, to take him to a church service. Mamdouh was suspicious of his intentions, knowing Kamel was an enemy of the Christian faith. He didn't want him to disturb or ridicule his church, so he took him to another church of a different affiliation. Mohammed was determined to prepare himself correctly for the church meeting by learning a Christian prayer. In that way, he could act like a Christian and go unnoticed. He asked Mamdouh to write out a Christian prayer that he could memorize. Mamdouh wrote out the words of the Lord's Prayer found in Matthew 6:9-13. I will quote from Mohammed's own words what happened when he went into Mamdouh's spare room to rest and read the prayer:

I sat on the bed to read over and memorize the prayer. The first two words, "Our Father," grabbed me! "Our Father? Our daddy?" I asked myself incredulously, wondering whether I could have read correctly. Muslims would never dare to address God in this way! As a Muslim, I was taught that Allah was my master, a frightful and distant overseer who would

never allow me to approach him in such a familiar way. How disrespectful and foolish for Christians to address God like this; indeed, this was blasphemy!

Shaking my head, I casually opened the window, gazed out, and addressed the night sky in a mocking whisper: "God, did you marry my mother? Are you my father?" Suddenly, an inexplicable and overwhelming Presence filled the room. It was a powerful yet comforting, Presence that penetrated me to the very core of my soul. The response to my question was almost audible: "Yes, I AM your Father." I was suffused entirely [to gradually spread over and be overwhelmed] by God's Presence, enveloped by an indescribable Love. This was God's love for me, a fatherly love, the love of a daddy! God introduced Himself at that moment, saying He was my heavenly Father!

I felt like a little child who, having been estranged from his daddy for twenty-three years, had at long last been found. The love I felt was so overpowering that I wanted to proclaim it to the rooftops: God is my Father! God, the Creator of all, the All-Powerful, the Lord of Lords—is my Father!"

All through the night, I experienced the sensation of God's love hugging me, and I was desperately hugging Him back. I began to be mindful of all the wrong things I had done and how they grieved the Father. Every wrong I could recall ever having committed, I confessed to Him. I also expressed my remorse at having entered the church under false pretenses so that I could make fun of the Christians.

Becoming aware of my sins and how they grieved the Father convulsed me in gut-wrenching sobs. I cried so hard that Mamdouh heard me from the adjoining room. When he later asked why I had been crying so loudly, he couldn't believe that the Lord's Prayer had so profoundly affected me.

That night, I slept very deeply. When I awoke the following day, I felt as though I had shed the weight of a heavy camel that had been riding on my shoulders. Peace and comfort filled my heart. I learned later that this is what the Bible means when it says, "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).<sup>1</sup>

Mohammad Kamel, who had been an enemy of the Christian faith, changed his name to Daniel Abdul Massieh (Daniel the servant of Messiah) and now preaches the gospel of Christ. It was the thought of God being his Father that led him to understand the nature of God and His love for us in many different countries, including all over the Middle East, Arabic nations, and the USA.

To translate the Hebrew word *Abba* into the English word "Daddy" would be an incomplete interpretation. The Hebrew word is a term of intimacy, obedience, and tremendous respect and love. Jesus used the word to address His relationship with the Father.<sup>2</sup> Christ allows us to share in

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Massieh. *Traitor*. Published by Open the Gates Publishing, San Diego, CA 92198. Page 31-33.

Website: [www.openthegates.org](http://www.openthegates.org)

<sup>2</sup> <https://himpublications.com/blog/meaning-abba/>

that intimate relationship with God when we receive His Spirit “For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship” (Romans 8:15).

**Deepest Experience.** Thirdly, the Holy Spirit gives us the most profoundly possible experience of God. “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children” (Romans 8:16). He wants us to know, deep within, that we are children of God. Just as each of us wants our children to know and experience our love for them, God wants His children to rest assured of His love and tender relationship as Father. The Holy Spirit gives us an inner witness that we belong to God.

**Greatest Security.** Fourthly, Paul tells us that to be a son or daughter of God is the greatest security. For if we are children of God, we are also “heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17).

Paul adds, “If indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory” (v.17). This is not a condition but an observation. Christians identify with Jesus Christ, which could mean rejection and opposition here and now, but it is nothing compared to our inheritance as children of God.

### Developing the Relationship

Our relationship with God grows and deepens as we spend time with Him. The Spirit of God helps us to develop that relationship by bringing us into the presence of the Father. “For through him (Jesus) we both (Jews and Gentiles alike) have access to the Father by one Spirit” (Ephesians 2:18). Through Jesus, by the Spirit, we have access to the presence of God. The temple's veil has been torn from top to bottom to show that the way is open to the believer in Christ. Matthew explains how this veil was torn at the time that Jesus died on the cross:

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land<sup>[5]</sup> until the ninth hour. <sup>46</sup>And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” <sup>47</sup>And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, “This man is calling Elijah.” <sup>48</sup>And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. <sup>49</sup>But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.” <sup>50</sup>And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. <sup>51</sup>And behold, **the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.** And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. <sup>52</sup>The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, <sup>53</sup>and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. <sup>54</sup>When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!” (Matthew 27:45-54).

When Jesus died on the cross, God gave us thought-provoking signs to show that this was no ordinary death. What were these signs, and what was their significance?

When Jesus walked the earth, many barriers between people and God were evident in the culture and their practice of worship. These barriers were clear to Gentiles who wanted to worship in the temple. All non-Jews were separated from the children of Israel and kept in a different court, the Court of the Gentiles, restricted from coming near God's temple. Through Christ's death on the cross, Jesus removed the barrier between God and us so that we could come into God's presence. We often don't appreciate the removal of the barrier and the privilege of being able to draw near

to God by faith. God hears us when we pray, for we have immediate access to His presence by the Spirit.

***The Spirit Helps Us to Pray.*** Not only does the Spirit bring us into the presence of God, but He also helps us to pray:

We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans (Romans 8:26).

What matters is not the place or position in which we pray or whether or not we use set forms of prayer; what matters is whether or not we are praying in the Spirit.

What do you think it means to pray in the Spirit?

***The Spirit Helps Us Understand God's Word.*** Another part of developing our relationship with God is understanding what He is saying to us. Again, the Spirit of God enables us to do this. Paul says, "I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened" (Ephesians 1:17,18). The Spirit of God is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. He brings light to our eyes to understand what God is saying through the Bible, for example.

Ultimately, we will never understand Christianity without the Holy Spirit opening our eyes to God's truth. We can see enough to take a step of faith, which is not a blind leap of faith, but accurate understanding often only follows faith. Anselm of Canterbury said, "I believe in order that I might understand." Only when we believe and receive the Holy Spirit can we understand God's revelation.

The Spirit of God helps us develop our relationship with God, enabling us to sustain that relationship. People often worry that they will not be able to keep going in the Christian life. In our own strength, we are right to worry. We can't keep going by ourselves, but God, by His Spirit, gives us new life and the ability to stand in God's strength. We do not live the Christian life based on performance but rather through our new relationship with God, into which Christ has brought us, and it is the Holy Spirit who maintains that relationship. We are utterly dependent on Him. He is faithful in showing us things that grieve the Holy Spirit's mind and bringing us an awareness of sin when we do or think about something that offends God. He is always at work in our lives, bringing us from one degree of glory to another, always moving us toward the image of Jesus.

### **The Family Likeness**

As we spend time in the presence of God, the Spirit of God transforms us. As Paul writes, "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18). We are being transformed into the moral likeness of Jesus Christ.

Paul tells us that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). These are the characteristics that the Spirit of God develops in our lives. We have already seen that Christ's righteousness is imparted to us at the moment of our rebirth as Christians. How this righteousness is manifested in our day-

to-day lives is a work of the Holy Spirit, changing us into His image. The Holy Spirit gives us a legal standing transformation that provides us with spiritual authority and a character change that works itself out in our human lives. The depth and reality of the nature of God and our experience of intimacy with God on this side of eternity depend upon our responses to Him. He will draw near to us when we draw near to Him:

**Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded (James 4:8).**

### **Unity in the Family**

When we come to Christ and become sons and daughters of God, we become part of a vast family. Like every godly parent, the Lord desires unity in His family. Jesus prayed for unity among His followers (John 17), and Paul also pleaded with the Ephesian Christians to “**make every effort to keep *the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace***” (Ephesians 4:3, italics mine).

The same Holy Spirit lives in all Christians wherever they are and whatever their denomination, background, color, or race. He is active in bringing about unity in the family of God.

**What does unity in the family look like to you? How is the enemy (Satan) working today in the world and in the Church to bring about disunity? How should we respond to this kind of warfare against the people of God?**

Whenever we see seeds of disunity sown by our enemy, we should counter them by doing the opposite of the dark spirit that's at work. Satan seeks to sow division to cause brothers to be in opposition to one another. He works to cause Pentecostals to be against Baptists, Charismatics against Evangelicals, Anglicans against Lutherans, or even whether you have responded to the latest health emergency or not. When Christ comes for His Church, He won't ask about your medical papers!

Our mindset and attitude should be to accept all believers in Christ, regardless of their political opinions, maturity, nationality, skin color, or any other difference on earth. We have all been given a heavenly Kingdom. Christ loves all the Church, and so must we. The Church is like a diamond, reflecting the light of God. We should appreciate every reflection of this multi-faceted jewel as we spread the light of Christ to those around us. Our love for one another will win this younger generation, in particular, and the whole world.

**By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another (John 13:35).**

It is important to remember that when we discount another believer in Christ and do not recognize or honor that person, we take sides with the enemy. Our enemy is not flesh and blood. He (Satan) is called the Accuser of the Brethren. We do not want to agree with him! Unity in the Body of Christ opens the way for the Spirit of God to move in power. Disunity causes the Holy Spirit to be grieved, limiting the power of God to move in the Church. We must agree with the Spirit of God to be used by Him and keep in step with Him. Suppose we want to stay in step with the Spirit of God. In that case, we need to let go of our own ideas of self-righteousness, our preferences, prejudices, and all worldly ways of thinking and relating to one another and see one another in the

light of God's forgiveness and His great mercy. All of the Church is precious in God's sight and greatly loved.

The same Holy Spirit is in every child of God, and He desires that we should be united. Indeed, it is nonsense for the church to be divided because there is *“one body and one Spirit...one hope...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all”* (Ephesians 4:4-6, italics added).

It is a tremendous privilege to be part of this enormous family; one of the great joys of coming to Christ is experiencing this unity. There is a closeness and depth of relationship in the Christian church that I have never found outside. We must make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit at every level in our small groups, congregations, local churches, and the worldwide Church.

### **Gifts for the Children**

Every Christian is different and has distinctive gifts. The New Testament gives several lists of the gifts of the Spirit. In 1 Corinthians, Paul lists nine gifts:

*Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another the gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines (1 Corinthians 12:7-11).*

There is an urgent need for the gifts of the Spirit to be exercised as we go out to share our faith with people on the streets and in our work. One of the significant problems in the Church at large is that so few are exercising their gifts. Church growth expert Eddie Gibbs wrote,

The present high level of unemployment in the nation pales into insignificance compared to that which prevails in the church. As a result, a few people are left doing everything and are totally exhausted, while the rest need to be more utilized. The Church has been likened to a soccer match, in which thousands of people desperately in need of exercise watch twenty-two people desperately in need of a rest!

The Spirit of God gives each of us gifts. God does not require us to have many gifts, but He desires us to use what we have and to hunger for more (1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1).

### **The Growing Family**

God said to Adam and Eve, *“Be fruitful and multiply”* (Genesis 1:28). It should be natural for God's family to grow. Again, this is the work of the Spirit. Jesus said, *“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witness in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”* (Acts 1:8).

When we experience the Spirit of God, we want to tell others about it. As we do, the family grows. The Christian family should never be static. The family of God should continually grow and draw in new people who receive the power of the Holy Spirit and go out and tell others about Jesus.

It is essential to remember that the Holy Spirit indwells every Christian. Paul says, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ" (Romans 8:9). Even though every true believer in Christ has the Holy Spirit, not every Christian is filled with Him. Paul writes to the Christians in Ephesus, saying, "Be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).

I want to end this study by looking at Revelation 22:17 (one of the last verses in the Bible). The Spirit of God is active throughout the Bible, from Genesis through Revelation.

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).

God wants to fill every one of us with His Spirit. When we thirst and ask, God will give us "the free gift of the water of life" (Revelation 22:17).

Prayer: Lord, we ask that You draw near to us by Your Holy Spirit and cause us to hunger and thirst more for You. We want to experience all that You have for us. Help us to hear You and respond to Your Spirit. Speak to us through Your Word and make us aware of Your presence as we go about our day.

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