

Evotional.

Date: 13th June 2010 (am & pm).

Speaker: Neil Durling.

Message title: "The Holy Spirit."

Bible passage: Various passages.



Message summary:

Many Christians want to ignore the topic of the Holy Spirit; they'd rather have a Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Bible than Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For some of us the topic causes anger, or an underlying simmering tension. In my experience, this has often been the most difficult topic for discussion in Alpha Courses.

The gift of the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit is a gift to us from the Father and Son who comes to dwell within us to (John 14:26). One writer put it this way: "We need Jesus Christ for eternal life and the Holy Spirit for our internal life." Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would be our counsellor and comforter. I imagine him to be similar to an American footballer who protects the attacker as they run for the touch line, reminding and encouraging them about where they are going. Also, when we become Christians, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of our eternal inheritance (2 Corinthians 1:21-22 and Ephesians 1:13-14).

The Holy Spirit gives us gifts: The Holy Spirit is excited to give us gifts, called "charisma" in Greek, which literally means "a gift of holy grace." We are all given at least one of the gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 27-29 and Romans 12:3-8: The message of wisdom, the message of knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, speaking in different kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues, helping others, administration, serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing to the needs of others, leadership and showing mercy.

Which one or ones are yours?

All are needed to make the body of Christ - a body with different working parts, and all equally valid.

Tensions in the body: Whilst we all believe this there are still tensions. I chatted to 2 ladies about this topic and here's what they had to say:

- *Lady one:* For this lady, the Holy Spirit has a vagueness, but that's ok. However, the obvious works of Holy Spirit (prophecy, tongues, etc.) seem more spectacular and make her feel like a second class citizen. When asked how the Holy Spirit was evident in her life she responded: In vague ways; gentle nudges. The Holy Spirit is like a gentle, guiding light, a presence around and within her, who "hems me in" as the Psalmist puts it. He's not always a conscious thought, but this lady knows he's there. When she hears a tongue in a service she finds it so foreign and can't understand it. She is suspicious, and sometimes wonders about the giver's motivation. She feels cringy and often thinks it is a load of baloney. How do people know that the interpretation is correct? When she hears someone say; "God told me" she wants to know *how* God told them. Towards the end of the conversation she admitted that she likes to be in control and these Holy Spirit things means she isn't in control. She *wants* to let God have total control, but not be seen as a fruitcake! Her family upbringing effects her, as she was raised to have a "stiff upper lip". The fact is that relying on the Holy Spirit means we need someone else; that we are weak. Often, we don't like to admit this.
- *Lady two:* I relayed the conversation with lady one to this lady and she immediately said that we can always take back control and walk away at any time. She admitted that she used to feel like the other lady and was actively saying to the Holy Spirit: "Go away and leave me alone, I don't want to be a freak." But then she did invite the Holy Spirit into her life because she was envious of seeing him in other's lives. When she sensed something happening she tentatively prayed: "Yes please, include me too". And as she has given more freedom to the Holy Spirit she has become happier and more confident. As she got braver, she asked for gifts she specifically saw in others. I asked her if she thought this meant lady one was a scaredy cat? "Oh no," she replied. "But you can see how she could hear it that way don't you?" I responded. "That's not my intention," she said. I asked her if we all had to become like her. No, because we are all different and the Holy Spirit is sympathetic to our personalities: we are all more inclined to being more spiritual, emotional, physical or intellectual. But what we need is for the Holy Spirit to reign over our entire personality, to be at the centre of who we are.

Why can we be so divided by the Holy Spirit? We all believe in the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts so why are there so many views and expressions that seem to clash?

How can we help each other? Some of us need to be:

- *Open instead of suspicious:* Lady one told me that I could preach on the Holy Spirit for the rest of her life but it probably wouldn't change how she felt. Basically she needs to make a conscious effort to be open, and see where that leads. (She found The Shack slightly helpful because it personified the Holy Spirit)
- *Clear instead of sloppy:* Lady two is not manipulative when it comes to the Holy Spirit but without meaning it her words can hurt those who already feel the tension of the Holy Spirit. When trying to be gentle, people like her can, instead, sound arrogant.

A prayer:

Father, may we be like Dr. Rendel Harris of whom Elton Trueblood said: "He was warm hearted and clear headed."