

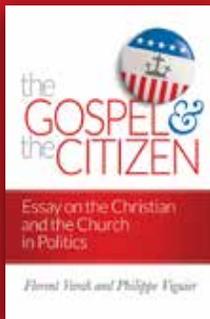
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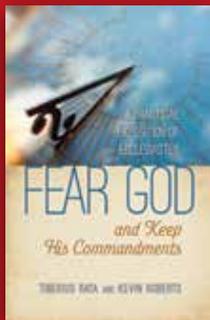
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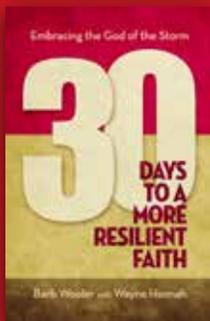
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A GUIDING SPIRIT

“To be led by the Spirit providentially is a matter of faith and obedience to the Word of God.”



In more than two years of change at GraceConnect and BMH Books, I sometimes feel I've had a master class on how to rely on the Holy Spirit. It's been a whirlwind of rebranding, changing business operations, downsizing, and other challenges.

Not that I didn't before, but once one is placed in leadership, leaning on the Spirit is an imperative. How else could one or two individuals begin to help connect groups of people across the North American continent? Who could explain how obscure stories reveal themselves? How else would one explain the marketing opportunities available, in spite of limited time and resources?

As I travel representing GraceConnect, I begin a trip or enter a room of people after whispering, “Lord, show me a story of how you are working.” I'm no longer surprised that I come away with one or two accounts from the Grace Brethren network that can be told in the GraceConnect e-News. In fact, when I don't find those stories, I'm soberly reminded that I didn't ask for those stories to be revealed.

At the same time, I can't tell you when I've dramatically been moved to action by the Spirit – being awakened in the night to pray for someone or taking the opportunity to speak to an individual about the Lord.

It's caused me to spend more time listening to Him and being aware of His nuances in my life.

As I prepared for this issue, I turned to the BMH Books classic, *The Holy Spirit and You*, by Bernard N. Schneider.* (An excerpt from the book is included in this issue.)

Schneider, who pastored Grace Brethren churches in Virginia, Ohio, and Florida, writes, “If the sinless, holy Jesus constantly needed to rely upon the power and leading of the Holy Spirit, how much more do we need His power and leading! Praise be to God that this same person with all His power, is standing by, waiting on us to let Him fill our lives with His fullness.”

As Dan Thornton writes in this issue, “He makes the believer's paths straight. He works within to bring about sanctification. He illumines the Word, giving wisdom and spiritual insight. To be led by the Spirit providentially is a matter of faith and obedience to the Word of God.”

It's reassuring to know that such power is available – no matter where I am or what I'm doing. I think my master class on the Holy Spirit is not going to end.

**The Holy Spirit and You*, by Bernard N. Schneider, BMH Books 1978 is no longer in print, but plans are being made to release it as an ebook.



Liz Cutler Gates, lcgates@bmbhbooks.com, is the editor of Grace Connect. Since 2010, she has served as executive director of the Brethren Missionary Herald Company. She and her husband, Doug, live in Warsaw, Ind.

THE PERSONALITY AND DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

by Bernard N. Schneider

The Holy Spirit is presented in Scripture as having the same essential deity as the Father and the Son and is to be worshipped and adored, loved and obeyed in the same way as God. To regard the Holy Spirit in any other way is to make one guilty of blasphemy and unbelief.



MANY AND VARIED ARE THE DEFINITIONS OF PERSONALITY, BUT ALL OF THEM INCLUDE AT LEAST... INTELLIGENCE, VOLITION, AND EMOTION.



One of the most respected Bible teachers, Dr. John F. Walvoord, stated in his book, *The Holy Spirit*:

It is a fundamental revelation of Scripture that the Holy Spirit is a person in the same sense that God the Father is a person and the Lord Jesus Christ is a person. The Holy Spirit is presented in Scripture as having the same essential deity as the Father and the Son and is to be worshipped and adored, loved and obeyed in the same way as God. To regard the Holy Spirit in any other way is to make one guilty of blasphemy and unbelief.

In this short statement we are confronted with two important facts concerning the Holy Spirit: that He is a person like the Father and the Son, and that He is as truly God as God the Father and God the Son.

The importance of being certain of the true nature of the Holy Spirit came to me with a jolt while reading a conclusion by René Pache in his book *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*. The conclusion reads:

Indeed, if the Spirit were merely a power coming from above, it would be at my disposal and I could use it at will. But if the Spirit is a Person, and more than that, if He is God Himself, it is I who should be at His disposal, and love and obey Him in all things. Besides, receiving into our hearts not only a blessing, but also the presence of the Almighty God is to have within us the source of all grace and of all possibility.

With this tremendous possibility facing us, let us carefully examine the Word of God and see what it has to say about the true nature of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit Is A Person

The Holy Spirit has all the characteristics of personality.

Many and varied are the definitions of personality, but all of them include at least

three characteristics, which are: intelligence, volition, and emotion. Intelligence is the ability to understand and reason intelligently. Volition (or will) is the ability to choose and decide. Emotion is the ability to feel inwardly—as to love, hate, sorrow, appreciate, and so forth. A fourth characteristic which is often found in definitions of personality is that of moral appreciation, or the ability to distinguish between that which is morally right or wrong, good or evil. A person is certainly a rational and moral being.

The Holy Spirit is presented in the Scriptures as having all these characteristics in the very highest degree.

The Holy Spirit has intelligence. “For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:10). The original word, which is translated “searches” means to trace carefully or to track down. The same word (with the negative added) is used to tell us that God’s judgments are “unsearchable” (Rom. 11:33). God’s judgments often baffle us, but the Holy Spirit fully understands them, and He can reveal to us the deep things of God. We also read of “the mind of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:27).

The Holy Spirit has a will (1 Cor. 12:11). A careful consideration of the context (vv. 7-11) reveals the fact that the Holy Spirit bestows different gifts upon believers, as He chooses. What stronger proof could there be that He has both intelligence and will?

The emotions or sensibilities of the Holy Spirit are clearly evident. We are told that He can be lied to (Acts 5:3); grieved (Eph. 4:30); resisted (Acts 7:51); and insulted (Heb. 10:29). The Word speaks of “the love of the Spirit” (Rom. 15:30). We are therefore not surprised that the “fruit of the Spirit is love” (Gal. 5:22), and that “the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 5:5).

Moral appreciation is definitely a characteristic of the Spirit. His very name is “Holy Spirit.” He is also called “the spirit of holiness” (Rom. 1:4). The basic mean-

ing of “holy” and “holiness” in God’s Word is that of separation from all that is evil and dedication to that which is pleasing to God. This moral consciousness is so strong that any morally unclean or suggestive talk by the believer offends, or grieves the Spirit (Eph. 4:29-30).

Activities Demonstrate His Personality

It seems incredible that one can seriously consider the work which the Scriptures, and especially the Lord Jesus, attribute to the Holy Spirit, and still doubt or question His personality.

Jesus Christ stated that the Spirit inspired the writers of the Old Testament. “For David himself said by the Holy Spirit... Sit at my right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool” (Mark 12:36; cf. Ps. 110:1).

Concerning the Spirit’s work during this present age, Christ promised the following:

The Holy Spirit will teach (John 14:26), help you remember all things (John 14:26), convict the world (John 16:8), guide in all truth (John 16:13), speak and prophesy (John 16:13), glorify me (John 16:14), and will take of mine and declare it to you (John 16:15).

All these activities are those of an intelligent person, not of an impersonal power or influence. An impersonal power does not teach, remind, testify, reprove, guide, speak, glorify, and communicate. In this connection it is notable that on His last night before His crucifixion, our Lord used the personal pronouns “him” and “himself” at least 20 times while speaking of the Holy Spirit.

Aside from Christ’s own words, the Scriptures report abundant activities of the Holy Spirit that testify to His personality. Lack of space forbids a full treatment of this subject.

These quotations are self-explanatory and simply demand that the Holy Spirit of whom the Scriptures speak, is a person who acts as a person. The idea that an im-

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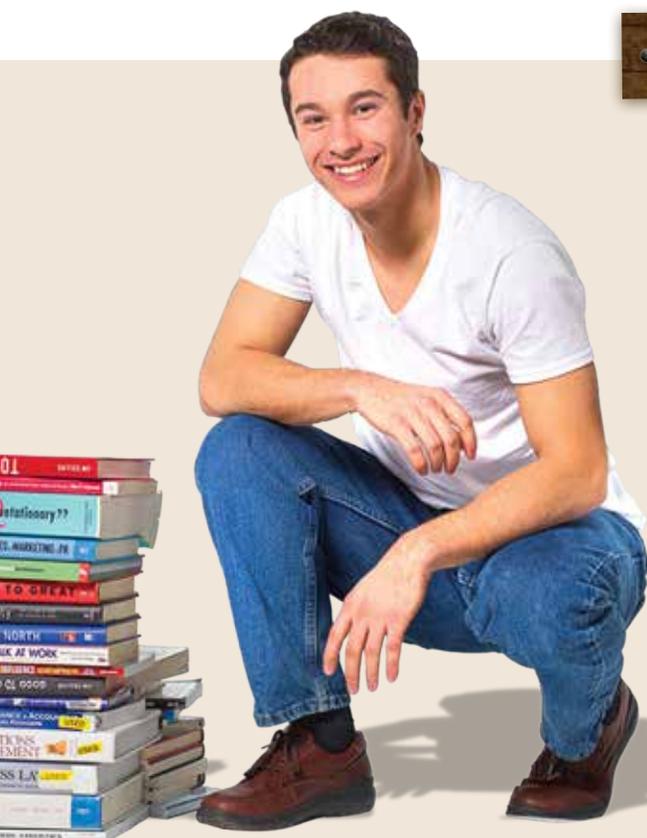
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THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A DIVINE PERSON. HE IS VERY GOD, ONE WITH, AND EQUAL WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON.



personal power or influence answers to this description is preposterous.

In Romans 8:26, we are assured that “The Spirit Himself makes intercession for us.” Can an impersonal power or influence pray for me? Can the power of God pray to God? Can anything but a person pray for us? If words have meaning, then the Holy Spirit of whom the Bible speaks, is a distinct person, not a mere power or influence of God.

The Deity Of The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is a divine person. He is very God, one with, and equal with the Father and the Son. This means that He is equally important with the Father and the Son. The overall picture leaves no doubt about the Spirit’s deity.

The Holy Spirit is presented as God. Reading all the references of the Scripture to the Holy Spirit certainly gives one the impression that His deity is a fact that is understood and needs no special argument. However, the following passages strongly support His deity:

The Great Commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). This is the name of God, given to us by the Son. This is His definition of the Godhead. All three persons are equal, which can only mean that if one is God, the other is the same God. There is but one name. There are not three gods, but one God, who exists in three persons. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. To conclude that one of the three is less than the other two is doing violence to the meaning of language and is a denial of the inspiration of Scripture.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth...and the Spirit of God was hovering upon the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:1-2). It is certainly significant that in the opening sentences of God’s revelation to man, the Holy Spirit is introduced

as “the Spirit of God,” who is at work with God in the creation.

Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit? ...you have not lied to men, but to God” (Acts 5:3-4; cf. v. 9). The very strong implication is that the Holy Spirit to whom they lied, is God.

The New King James Version renders Paul’s testimony to the deity of the Holy Spirit.:

Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (II Cor. 3:17-18).

A literal rendering of the Greek would read: “Even as from Lord Spirit.” We find then that the Holy Spirit is called “the Lord” twice in this passage--at the beginning of verse 17, “Now the Lord is that Spirit,” and at the end of verse 18, “The Lord who is the Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit has the attributes of God. He possesses eternity (Heb. 9:14), is omniscient (1 Cor. 2:10-11), has omnipotence (Zech. 4:6), and is omnipresent (1 Cor. 6:19; Ps. 139:7).

The Holy Spirit performs works that only God can perform. The activities of the Spirit are many and include those that belong only to God. All the work that the Father does, as well as all that the Son does, is also done by the Holy Spirit. The only exceptions are those activities that demanded the incarnation of the Son, such as giving His life to accomplish man’s redemption.

The Holy Spirit took part in creation in that He “was hovering over the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2). We read that “by His Spirit He [God] adorned the heavens” (Job 26:13). The Holy Spirit creates.

The Holy Spirit generated the humanity of Christ. This is one of the mysteries of the

Incarnation. We know that the Father sent the Son (1 John 4:14), but it was the Holy Spirit who actually generated the human body within the virgin, Mary. The Word of God is very specific and precise on the matter (Luke 1:34-35; Matt. 1:18-20).

The Holy Spirit regenerates (John 3:6) and sanctifies (1 Peter 1:2; 2 Thess. 2:13).

Sanctification is the work of God whereby the believer is set apart from sin unto God. This divine work has three aspects, relating to the past, the present, and the future, and is part of God’s wonderful salvation through Christ. Our past sanctification took place at the time of the New Birth, when God set us aside from sin to belong to Him. Our present sanctification is a present process whereby we are delivered from the power of sin while living as children of God in the midst of a sinful world. The future aspect of sanctification will take place at the time of the second coming of Christ when the believer will be forever delivered from the presence of sin. Please observe that this great work of God is said to be the work of the Father (John 17:17; Jude 1). It is the work of the Son (1 Cor. 1:2, 30). It is also the work of the Holy Spirit as we have seen before. The more we consider the work of the Spirit, the more we see that it is the work of God and that the three persons of the Godhead work in perfect unity and harmony, each accomplishing His particular part to complete the whole.

Putting it all together, we come to the only logical conclusion, that is, the Holy Spirit of whom the Bible speaks is a person who is God and who does the work of God.

Let us therefore not fail to yield our lives to the control of this wonderful Paraclete!

Adapted from The Holy Spirit and You, by Bernard N. Schneider (BMH Books 1978 out-of-print). All scripture references have been updated to the New King James Version.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE LED BY THE SPIRIT?

by Dan Thornton

To follow the path of selfishness leads to sin, and to follow the path of law leads to bondage. God has revealed in the life of Jesus Christ and in Galatians that there is a third path - following the Holy Spirit.

TO BE LED BY THE SPIRIT IS TO FOLLOW THE GUIDANCE OF THE SPIRIT. IT IS TO BE SUBMISSIVE TO HIS WILL.



Being led implies following the will of another. For example, a prisoner is led by guards to prison; sheep are led by the shepherd to pasture. To be led by the Spirit is to follow the guidance of the Spirit. It is to be submissive to His will, making His desires the rule of life. He is the commander. We are to obey.

The leadership of the Holy Spirit is essential for every believer. To follow the path of selfishness leads to sin, and to follow the path of law leads to bondage. God has revealed in the life of Jesus Christ and in Galatians that there is a third path – following the Holy Spirit. In Galatians 5:16, walking in the Spirit defeats sin. And in Galatians 5:18, being led by the Spirit avoids bondage to the law. The only proper path for a believer is the one Jesus modeled, following God in personal relationship through the Spirit. Romans 8:14 teaches that following the guidance of the Holy Spirit is the identifying trait of the children of God. It is essential for every believer to understand the leading of the Holy Spirit and to submit to Him.

Various Ways the Spirit Leads

The first way the Spirit leads is through providential teaching. Jesus promised his disciples in John 16:13 that the Spirit would lead them into all truth. Though this promise applied to the apostolic writing of the New Testament, it applies also to Christians today (compare 1 Corinthians chapters 1 and 2). In Matthew 10:19-20 Jesus instructed the twelve disciples, when arrested for their faith, not to prepare a defense, but to trust the Holy Spirit to give the right words to say. The Spirit can direct the believer's thoughts and words. Similarly, in 1 John 2:27 John encouraged believers to trust the Spirit to distinguish between truth and error. They are not at the whim of fickle teachers and complex-sounding arguments, but have confidence the Holy Spirit will guide them to the truth.

A second way the Spirit leads is through conscious teaching. For instance, when King David gave Solomon the plans for the temple in 1 Chronicles 28:12, David was conscious that the Spirit had led by putting the plans in his mind, helped him to write them down, then explained the details to David (verse 19). In a similar way, the prophets were "carried" by the Spirit as they spoke their prophecies (2 Peter 1:21). Then also at the conclusion of the Jerusalem council meeting in Acts 15:28, the participants knew their final decision was the decision of the Holy Spirit. Likewise, Paul was conscious that his own preaching was a result of the Spirit at work (1 Corinthians 2:3-5). The principle is that, when needed, the Spirit can direct the thoughts and give understanding in such a way that the believer is conscious that the product is from the Holy Spirit.

A third way the Spirit leads is by communicating specific commands from God. For example, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert for the purpose of being tempted by the devil (Luke 4:1). Similarly, the Spirit told Philip to go to the Ethiopian's chari-

ot (Luke 8:29). The Spirit gave a specific detailed command Philip could obey. Another example is when the Holy Spirit spoke up at a prayer meeting and said "Set apart Barnabas and Saul for me for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2-4). After the commissioning service, the two set out, considering themselves to be sent by the Holy Spirit, not by the church leaders. Then there was the time Paul's mission trip plans were interrupted by the unexpected prohibitions of the Spirit (Acts 16:6-7). The Spirit can clearly give direct commands, when necessary.

Especially helpful here is the time the Spirit dramatically instructed Peter to go to Caesarea to visit the Gentile Cornelius (Acts 10:19). Because of Peter's strong conviction to the contrary, the Spirit had to be very clear. Note that the Spirit did not always give commands to Peter. To the contrary, Peter received his guidance to go to Samaria by being appointed to do so by those in authority (Acts 8:14); he went to Lydda as part of a prepared tour (Acts 9:32); and he went to Joppa because of the urgent appeal from Christians there (Acts 9:38). Caesarea? That took a vision, the voice of the Spirit, and a human request (Acts 10:9-24). The principle is that the Spirit will take whatever steps are necessary to lead in a particular situation. A human request alone would not suffice for Caesarea. A vision would be superfluous for Lydda.

Observations Regarding Direct Commands from the Spirit

From the above examples in Scripture, a few generalizations can be made about occasions when the Holy Spirit gives direct commands. First, this leading of the Spirit is clear. In every example where God gives a command through the Holy Spirit, the direction is specific and understood. God never mumbles. The Holy Spirit doesn't give out clues. A believer should not worry that he has somehow misunderstood God's special direction. When the Holy Spirit speaks, the hearer knows what He has said.

Second, the commands of the Spirit are personal and only intended for the recipient. For instance, only Jesus was called to a wilderness fasting temptation. This is not to be applied as an imperative for every believer. Likewise, Paul never considered the warnings the Spirit gave Agabus (Acts 21:11) to be a new command for himself (see Acts 20:22-23). Note how Joseph was right to decide to divorce Mary ("being a righteous man" – Matthew 1:19), in spite of her story of the angel's visit. Only after God gave personal guidance to Joseph did he change his plans. All these illustrate that special leading applies to the one who receives the leading personally, and not to others. This personal character of the leading of the Holy Spirit means that one person's leading does not trump another's responsibility to follow Scripture and wisdom. For instance, one church board member may be led of the Spirit to start a new kind of ministry, but that does not mean

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the rest of the board must agree with him. They must apply wisdom to the decision, and if God does not lead them the same way, they might need to say no to the other's request.

A third observation is that verbal commands from the Spirit are not the normal Christian experience. For instance, there is no indication Paul expected any Spirit-guidance when he planned his mission trip itineraries. Paul simply planned his trips and made adjustments as needed along the way. Only when there was something specific God wanted Paul to do, something that Paul would not otherwise plan to do, did God communicate through the Spirit additional guidance to Paul (Acts 16:6-10). So, if a believer receives no special guidance from God, that is no cause for concern. Rather, it is a compliment that God considers that believer fully capable of obeying God through proper study of Scripture and application of wisdom.

A final generalization is that commands from the Spirit often seem unwise. Since guidance from the Spirit is usually not what a person would come up with in his own wisdom, the command often seems unusual or even foolish. For instance, Gideon's military attack with only 300 men and Joshua's strategy of walking around Jericho as a means to conquer it, would both be considered foolish if it were not for God's specific direction.

This "against wisdom" principle has two important applications. First, when a believer receives special leading from the Spirit, he likely will not be able to convince others that it is the right thing to do. Samson could not convince his parents that his marriage to a Pharissee was "from the Lord" (1 Samuel 14:4). Any missionary God calls to a foreign land, when it requires him to leave his family for long periods of time, will have those who accuse him of doing wrong. Again, the disciples considered Jesus crazy for going to Jerusalem when people were poised to kill him there. In these situations, the believer must simply follow God's direction in humility and faith.

A second application of the "against wisdom" character of specific commands from the Holy Spirit is that we should not judge one another. Every believer must follow the Lord's Word and the Spirit's leading, and it is not for others to judge. Ousted King David stated this principle when defending the abusive Shimei (2 Samuel 16:9-10).

Conclusion

There is little, if any, controversy today over the fact that the Holy Spirit guides providentially. He makes the believer's paths straight. He works within to bring about sanctification. He illumines the Word, giving wisdom and spiritual insight. To be led by the Spirit providentially is a matter of faith and obedience to the Word of God. The Holy Spirit also guides individually and experientially. There is legitimate extra-Biblical divine guidance today whenever God desires a believer to do something specific that can't be attained through following the Scripture and wisdom. Though the exact process may vary, the result is clear: a definite, specific and confident knowledge of God's will for oneself. Let us trust the Spirit to lead, and confidently serve the Lord.

Dan Thornton is pastor of Maranatha Brethren Church, Hagerstown, Md.

THE CADENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S VOICE

by Jeremy Wike

I wish I could have been there. Though a watershed event in the Church, disunity blemishes our reflections of that momentous day. Our heritage has been on the side of “fearing what we don’t understand” when it comes to Pentecost. Acts 2 tells of the birth of the glorious Bride of Christ, the Church, the giving of the promised Holy Spirit. It was the day the Church grew by 3,000 people, evidenced by baptism celebrating new life in the resurrected Jesus.

When the Holy Spirit first arrived, the incredible happened—a sound like a violent wind filled the whole house and each person began speaking in tongues!

Crowds had gathered from all sorts of people groups to show their gratitude to God with offerings of the summer grain harvest. At 9:00 a.m. some found it strange that a group of fellow Jews were babbling out in the open. But they couldn’t possibly be... yes, they were communicating with others in different languages! This odd scene required an explanation.

The Apostle Peter stood up and explained that the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon these “babblers” just as Joel had predicted. This was groundbreaking! This was, well, not the way anyone thought it would happen. It was even better, albeit mysterious. Was this an exceptional event or a repeatable sequence of manifestations when the Holy Spirit decided to act?

Peter pulled no punches that day as he declared that though the Jews had been complicit with Rome in crucifying Jesus just weeks before, it was God’s master plan all along. What was needed now was repentance—a change of direction, a fresh understanding of God and God’s unfolding plan through Jesus.



When the crowd was “cut to the heart” with conviction, they were ripe for the pickin’! Peter declared that they needed to “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:38a).

Reading this verse lubricates my Anabaptist convictions! Turn from sin toward Jesus. Receive forgiveness. Express this newfound faith by means of the symbolic waters of baptism “in the name of the Father and of the Son...” (Matthew 28:19). Wait. There’s more, isn’t there?

Peter had more important theology to articulate in Acts 2:38: “And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” This was not a superfluous detail! We immerse those we baptize a third time: “In the name...of the Holy Spirit.”

My childhood theological training lacked any clear definition or assistance in identifying the presence of the Holy Spirit in my life. In fact, it was sheer neglect more than confusion (barring the occasional ludicrous story I heard that made me wary of the phrase “the Holy Spirit told me...”).

As a senior in high school, I got hooked on John MacArthur and read his classic, *Charismatic Chaos*. It was then that I was confident that the extreme, anecdotal stories of outlandish behaviors the Holy Spirit has been used to justify should compel me to steer clear of this “Holy Spirit” nonsense. (Holy rollers, anybody?) Let’s allow Scripture to be clear and the Holy Spirit be put back into our theological boxes. Safely out of reach for everyday life.

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I DIDN'T DESERVE THE ABILITY TO DISCERN THE VOICE OF GOD. THE KEY WAS TO LEARN THE CADENCE OF THE SPIRIT'S VOICE.



I took Dr. Roger Peugh's Principles and Practice of Prayer class in college, which required me to stop talking about the importance of prayer and actually do it for an hour at a time with another person. So a friend and I set off on an awkward weekly journey of prayer. What would we pray about? What would our format be? We quickly found how easy it was to talk to God about things near and dear to us—and to the heart of our Heavenly Father.

I took two very important points from this developing habit. First, God wants me to talk to Him like He really is my “Daddy”—Abba Father. Second, the Holy Spirit has much to communicate. I needed to listen more. The neglected member of the Trinity wasn't done surprising me. I had much to learn, much to dismantle, and much humble pie to consume.

Within a couple years, I experienced three incidents that rattled me to my core. First, a young woman told me that God was telling her that we were supposed to be together. There was only one problem: God was not telling me the same thing. (I was tempted to tell John MacArthur the story so he could add it to his book if he ever revised it.)

The second incident occurred when I encountered another young woman at a college event. Emotion shot through me like a lightning bolt, though I'm not usually driven by emotion. She was someone I had thought “out of my league” and now she was interested in me. It was obvious -- the Holy Spirit had spoken. I was going to marry her.

My friends weren't impressed. They pointed to the ungodly ways I treated her, how the new bond had no relational foundation as we exited the infatuation phase, and that the Holy Spirit wouldn't endorse such a dysfunctional relationship. It was apparent to me those dissenters weren't spiritual. So I didn't listen.

Then things fell apart and I was left acknowledging that I owned the mess. But the Holy Spirit had told me...

I wondered, “Could someone give me a robust understanding of the Holy Spirit?” I wanted the empowerment of Pentecost. Not the repetition of that unique day in the founding of Jesus' Church, but something more than the dismissing tone of John MacArthur and his arsenal of anecdotal stories. I didn't want my story to confirm John's book. I wanted to negate it.

As embarrassing as youthful immaturity is, I share a third incident because it rounds out my sojourn. With a heart surrendered to God and a commitment to waiting on God's direction for my life, I unexpectedly heard the voice of God again. By then, I wasn't interested in listening. I thought I had proven incapable of discerning the Holy Spirit's voice. However, God wasn't accepting my resignation.

God's voice began telling me the name of the person I was to marry.

“Not again,” I mused. Not listening. Not going to hurt anyone else. I know how Jonah's story ended, but I'm getting on the next boat going the opposite direction.

After three days the voice became so loud that I wondered if I was suffering from a mental disorder. I called a mutual friend. I suggested he tell me I need counseling, but he let me down.

His own story was similar. Doug had looked at a roster of soccer players moving into the dorm one year and blurted out to the guy next to him: “Kaye. That's the girl I'm going to marry.”

Where did that come from? He didn't know. But God had spoken. Clearly. Doug and Kaye are happily married and serving God together.

Doug had no sympathy when I told him my heart was surrendered to God and that I was playing Jonah, not Samuel. He

ended up being more like Eli, actually more than Eli. He ended up being a vital part of my story.

I pursued this gal with absurd caution. I woke up early every day that fall and prayed for an hour, begging God to heal my wounded heart and to show me His way. I didn't begin to believe that healing was possible until about week six. Then it began to happen. God's voice became clearer. Scripture became more alive. And the Holy Spirit was no longer just an abstract doctrine or the leftovers from Peter's Pentecost sermon. He was God's gift to empower me to walk with God daily. You can conclude that I had female issues or that the Holy Spirit is faithful. I believe both are true! That poor confused gal became my wife and has been my amazing partner through thick and thin.

I didn't deserve the ability to discern the voice of God. The key was to learn the cadence of the Spirit's voice. I learned it in crisis. I hope your journey is different. As God told His people in exile through Jeremiah, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:11-13 NIV).

I had to experience much guilt and shame before I “found God”—that is, the third person of the Trinity, the precious “gift” we receive upon coming to faith in Jesus. I was not present for Pentecost in Acts 2. But the Holy Spirit has been present with me for much of my journey. Maybe I should tell John MacArthur the rest of my story. I'll settle for telling you, my brothers and sisters in the FGBC. Learn the cadence. It's the rest of God's gift for you.

Jeremy Wike is pastor of Community of Hope Grace Brethren Church, Columbia City, Ind.

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FGBC DELEGATES GATHER IN TORONTO

It was another historic conference in Toronto, as leaders and delegates from Grace Brethren churches in North America gathered to do business, celebrate what God has done, and learn from one another.

Held July 22-25, 2016 at the Sheraton Centre Toronto Hotel, Margins|2016 marked 20 years since a group of young church planters were commissioned at another Grace Brethren gathering, also in Toronto, to begin a new Grace Brethren church in the metro area. That effort has blossomed into GBCanada, a network of Grace Brethren churches in the country.

Representatives of the four Grace Brethren congregations from across Canada gathered during conference to celebrate this 20-year anniversary.

Conference delegates voted unanimously to become a charter member of the Charis Alliance, the international network of Grace Brethren churches. In addition, they endorsed the Charis Commitment to Common Identity as the identity statement of the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches and encouraged its use by member congregations, the Association of Grace Brethren Ministers, national and cooperating organizations, and districts to train leaders and to communicate and explain the Grace Brethren movement.

Both motions came at the end of the annual business meeting of the FGBC and had been recommended to the delegates by the Fellowship Council, the guiding board of the FGBC.

Also in the meeting, five new member churches were added: Sterling Grace Brethren Church, Sterling, Alaska (Roger Holl, pastor); Impact Church, Coatesville, Pa. (Chandal Taylor, pastor); Bow Island Community Bible Church, Bow Island, Alberta (Oliver Edwards, pastor); Grace Ranch of Ashland, Ohio (Nathan Wells, pastor); and St. Antoine Bible Church, Detroit, Mich. (Andy Shank, pastor).

Three men were elected to five-year terms on the Fellowship Council. They are: Adam Copenhaver, Mabton, Wash.; Doug Black, Johnstown, Pa.; and Doug Courter, Hagerstown, Md.

(photos, top to bottom) Bartley Sawatsky, church planter, pastor, and out-going executive director of the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches, presides at a celebration of 20 years of the Grace Brethren movement in Canada.

Pilar Forero, wife of Pastor Javier Forero, Valrico, Fla., shares her testimony during the meeting of Women of Grace USA.

Jeff Bogue, pastor of Grace Church, Bath Campus, Akron, Ohio, right, introduces Peter Yoo and Juan Carlos and Emily Téllez. The Téllez' and the Yoos are moving to Atlanta to plant an international church in partnership with Grace Church, Encompass World Partners, and the Grace Brethren Investment Foundation.



WORKING TOGETHER

by Mrs. R. A. (Carolyn) Peak



Nearly every week when I zip together my personal laundry bag, I thank the Lord for the lesson He taught me from that zipper. That zipper is an old metal one, in good condition, but as contrary as they come. For weeks I struggled to make it work properly, but it either would not cooperate with my efforts or did so reluctantly. It would zip a few teeth together and stop. No matter how hard I pulled, sometimes it would not go any further. I would move the head back to the start and try again. Often to little or no avail. Getting that zipper to close required a major pushing and pulling effort every week, grating teeth on one side against those of the other. I nearly threw the bag away. Then it occurred to me that perhaps a bit of Vaseline on the teeth might help. Using my little finger, on a few teeth on both sides of the zipper, I dabbed a speck of Vaseline right next to the head. Then I pulled, and presto! The zipper zipped. As if by magic, it went together. I pulled it open just as easily and zipped it shut again, just to be certain I wasn't dream-

ing. Sure enough! That zipper was working as it was designed to work, smoothly and efficiently.

Then I smiled, for the Lord made me see those contrary zipper teeth as a collection of believers, the head as the leader, and the Vaseline as the oil of the Holy Spirit. Though the leader may be doing a commendable job of leading (as the zipper head was doing a commendable job of trying to zip), and though the believers may be designed to work together (as the teeth were designed to zip together), without the Holy Spirit, only unpleasant pushing, pulling, and grating will get the work accomplished. But with His presence, with His filling of each one involved, the work goes smoothly and quickly.

Perhaps Zechariah said it best when he wrote: “. . . not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord . . .” (Zech. 4:6 NKJV); or to paraphrase it: “By My Spirit, those believers zip together and do My work!”

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