

# Don't Fear The Holy Spirit



Four Truths that Cure Anxieties &  
Make You Desire More

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**L**et me tell you why you shouldn't be afraid of the Holy Spirit. God's desire for us is that we should "Be on fire with the spirit" (Romans 12:11b NTE) but there are many wonderful Christians who distance themselves from the Holy Spirit. It is natural to withdraw from what you fear but by pulling back from the Spirit, you actually distance yourself from the source of life and the result is spiritual dryness. If you long for a renewal in your life, being more open to the Spirit is the only way to go. In this article, I want to encourage you to draw close to the Holy Spirit. I begin by sharing some reasons why people keep the Holy Spirit at arm's length and then give four powerful biblical reasons why you don't have to be afraid of the Spirit—even if you have had some troubling experiences or lack of experiences altogether. Make yourself comfortable, get some refreshments, and let's get started.

Many Christians suffer from a disease we can call "pneumaphobia"—from the two Greek words for Spirit (*pneuma*) and fear (*phobos*). It's a natural human reaction to withdraw from what we fear and the stronger our fear is, the further we will go from the object that instills the anxiety. But the Bible warns us not to suppress the Spirit:

**"Do not quench the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19 NKJV).**

**"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God" (Ephesians 4:30a NKJV).**

There are many reasons why Christians are plagued by pneumaphobia, let's mention the most common causes.

## Unhelpful Language

The old terminology "Holy Ghost" taken from the King James Bible which is over five hundred years old doesn't sound assuring and inviting. I don't want anything to do with ghosts, even if they might be friendly! We should quickly discard this old phrase and use more relevant terms instead that accurately portray the character and work of the Holy Spirit.

Even the biblical language for the Spirit can make us hesitant to draw closer to the Spirit. The names "Father" and "Son" help us relate to the first and second members of the Trinity in personal terms but the third member of the Trinity—God the Spirit—doesn't have any easily relatable name. "Spirit" can communicate impersonality, distance, hard to grasp, and so on. The way to get around this is to study the Scriptures to see what portrait of the Spirit the Bible paints: it is a very

personal and beautiful portrait (but I save that for another article). This is only to say that sometimes the language we use for the Spirit can make us distance ourselves, even if its unconsciously.

## Bad Experiences

Bad personal experiences can make us afraid of the Holy Spirit. We can feel anxious about the Holy Spirit because of how others have reacted to the presence of the Spirit. Just because God is present doesn't mean that human reactions are automatically sound and good. I know this first hand. As a young boy going to revival meetings with my parents, I witnessed adults sometimes act in ways that disturbed me (children dislike seeing grown-ups who should be in control show signs of losing it). As an adult, I've been in many meetings where people acted very weird supposedly inspired by the Spirit. In one meeting an elder in the church started to dance with the flower pots used for decorations. In another meeting, a person ran to the stage and made summersaults in front of everyone. I've been to meetings where thousands laughed hysterically, fell over chairs, lost control, acted drunk, and so on. In such meetings it is easy to feel unspiritual if we don't go along with the flow, so to speak, and it can build resentment against the Spirit.

## Prophetic Problems

Prophetic mishaps can make us avoid the Spirit. The preacher I looked up to as my role model as a young man had built his flourishing ministry on visions he had of Jesus, where Jesus taught him things and even conducted Bible studies with him. When I later learned the original languages of the Bible, I began to see that some of those visions couldn't have been genuine, because the Jesus he saw said things that are not in the Bible, I was very disheartened. The pain of realizing this made me pull away from the Spirit.

We might have received weird prophetic words that were either totally off or that somehow put us in a strange situation. During my undergraduate studies in theology in college, there was a single student lady in one of my classes who had a small child. She was unmarried and it wasn't a virgin birth if you know what I mean. One day another student came to my room. He was the self-proclaimed prophet of the college and he began to prophesy to me: "God is saying that you should marry that lady and her child is God's gift to you." What a message! It had never crossed my mind or heart. What to do? I thank God I'd received enough sound teaching not to simply obey any message supposedly from God but to do what the Bible says:

**"Do not despise prophecies. <sup>21</sup>Test all things; hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:20–21 NKJV).**



As I did this I knew in my heart that the message wasn't from God because any genuine word from God will come with God's sweet "perfume" of life, peace, and joy. If a message doesn't—and this certainly didn't but rather brought chaos and fear—just put it on the shelf and move on with God. I found out later that it wasn't a genuine word from the Spirit and that God saved me from a great mess and heartache. I know people who have married because of a (supposedly) prophetic word even though none of them really wanted to and they ended up in tragedy.

Prophecies that are either wrong or misinterpreted can cause us to become cold to the Spirit. One lady I know lost her father to cancer at a quite young age. It was a shock to the family because someone they trusted had prophesied that their father would recover. Because of this great disappointment, she became suspicious and closed herself to the Holy Spirit.

Many preachers claim to hear the voice of the Spirit saying very strange and unbiblical things. That in itself can make us want to pull back. I recently heard an

extremely popular preacher say that the Holy Spirit had told him to take a photo of himself in boxers every morning so that he could catalog his weight loss. Wait a minute; did the Holy Spirit say *that*? I don't think so (and if the Spirit had, why share it in a sermon?). Let's be honest: the Holy Spirit is blamed for a lot of nonsense. Many peoples' unsanctified imaginations are pinned on the Spirit. We can start to distance ourselves from the Spirit and shut down the voice of the Spirit in our lives for less.

## Manipulative Ministers

We can also withdraw from the Spirit because of how spiritual leaders misuse their gifts. Ministers can behave in ways that make us lose trust in the Holy Spirit. It is easy to lose trust in the Holy Spirit if anointed servants of God have manipulated us in some way. I've been there; I've felt manipulated to give away too much money (more than once!), to commit to projects I didn't feel at peace about, and to experience things that I actually didn't experience. In one revival meeting, I was called up to the platform by the preacher to be prayed for in front of thousands of people. But when I didn't fall as the preacher laid her hands on me (as was expected if you were truly spiritual) I got pushed over. Seriously! I do believe that we can encounter God in such ways that our bodies react in unusual ways. This is a common pattern in Scripture (e.g., Ezek. 1:28; John 18:6; Rev. 1:17). I've been so overwhelmed by the genuine power of the Holy Spirit at other times that I could no longer stand and I have seen the same many times while praying for others. But not so this time. And I refused to fake it. Many have been pushed over—both literally and figuratively—by zealous preachers. Others have been manipulated in more subtle ways.

A common mistake is that we separate charismatic power from character. But when it dawns on us that leaders with wonderful gifts of the Spirit can have a lack of character, it can make us withdraw from the Spirit.

## Insensitive Leaders

Spiritually anointed ministers can show a stunning lack of discernment at times. What is the work of the devil can also be said to be the move of the Spirit, and vice versa. I was in one meeting with a pastor who had been used by God in wonderful ways. While he preached there was a demonic manifestation in a person and it didn't take much discernment to see that it was demonic: not only did the person behave in very disorderly and unbecoming ways, the atmosphere in the church changed from peace to fear and my spirit

reacted as a cat does to a dog. The preacher's response surprised all of us: "let's be quiet and see what the Holy Spirit is saying". The ushers had to finally carry the person out into a nearby prayer room. The meeting never took off after that. A close relative struggled with some emotional wounds and went to a pastor for counseling. In the session, the pastor decided that my relative's problem was demonic and that she needed deliverance. My relative didn't agree and was firm on the fact that it wasn't a spiritual problem. But the pastor was vehement and began to pray

for deliverance. After quite some time with no result, he got frustrated and said that now it was her problem to sort out and with that, he simply left the room. I'm thankful that my relative was mature enough to handle this situation which otherwise could have been a devastating experience. I heard a similar situation where the preacher wanted to save their face and concluded that since nothing happened the demon was too big to cast out! Spiritual leaders sometimes can be very wrong in their actions and lack the humility to face reality. This can make us want to shy away from the Spirit.

## Christian Conflicts

Christian groups have been fighting over the experiences of the Holy Spirit. I know a large church that split because of disagreements about whether some experiences were of the Spirit or not. We shouldn't be too surprised: even the West and East

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churches broke a thousand years ago (AD 1054) because of differing views of the Spirit. It is ironic but true that human opinions about the Spirit who works unity and community have led to the exact opposite of disunity and splits in the church. When we see how good Christians get into conflict over the Spirit, it can make us want to take the peaceful route of non-engagement with the Spirit.

Regardless of what bad experiences we might have had, we do well to heed the saying that “the cure for misuse is not disuse but proper use”. That is, we should not limit the room for the Holy Spirit because of past hurts but instead expand our understanding of the Spirit in a biblical way.

## Experience Deficit

Not only can bad experiences make us afraid. A lack of experiences with the Holy Spirit can also make us less open. If we never experienced anything of the move of the Spirit it can sound so overwhelming and strange that we take the safe option of just staying away. Why take the risk of being caught up in a rushing mighty wind? I meet this a lot, especially among believers who come from Christian backgrounds that have not placed any emphasis on the Holy Spirit.

Many Christians live in a worldview that restricts the Spirit. It is not always a conscious choice but based on ignorance. They, like the twelve disciples in Ephesus that met Paul, simply “have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit” (Acts 19:2 NIV). We cannot seek the Spirit if we are unsure of the Spirit’s existence. Lack of personal experience and ignorance make fertile soil for fear. And I don’t blame those who struggle in this area; it’s natural to fear the unknown.

Some who have an experience deficit of the Spirit can at times be hesitant to open up to more of the Spirit because it might give the impression that their Christian background and belonging were substandard. They are afraid that if they start to seek the Spirit they will be

labeled with a name they don’t want, whether it be “Pentecostal”, “Charismatic”, or whatever. (Sadly, some groups have given the impression that they have a copyright on the Spirit). Opening to the Spirit means, they think, that they must change commitments and loyalties. In response to this, we should follow Jesus’ instruction and let tomorrow worry about itself (Matt. 6:34). I like what somebody said when it comes to expecting more of the Spirit and the complexity of theology and tradition: “in whatever name, just receive!”

## Personality Types

Some personality types have a harder time opening themselves to the Holy Spirit. Particularly if we belong to those who want to have a sense of control in life and be on top of what is going on around us, to let ourselves be influenced by a power we can’t predict and control makes a fearful option. Since this is not really within my personality type, I can sympathize but it isn’t such a big deal for me. Far worse is the notion of looking like a fool. Such personalities are less nervous about losing control while more concerned about losing their face (of course, the fear of control and face often coincide). Many shy away from the Spirit because they worry that they might lose honor or status in the eyes of people. The worst nightmare is to behave in ways that are not socially acceptable and makes others look with

disapproval or even disgust. The presence of mobile phones in our meetings where people can either send live on social media or post videos on YouTube for the world to see (and laugh!) does not help people relax and open themselves more to the Spirit. Whatever our personality type there is always a danger that our general anxieties hold us back from giving us fully to the Holy Spirit.

## Lies from the devil

Quite frankly, a major reason why believers are afraid of the Holy Spirit is that the devil has lied to them. We must never forget that the devil is a liar and that deception is

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his mother tongue (John 8:44). The father of lies is ever active trying to twist reality and instill fears that would make us withdraw and stay alienated from a close and life-giving relationship with God. Remember how the serpent presented an alternative reality to Adam and Eve in Eden (Gen. 3:1–5). In the devil's fake world, God was not the loving, kind Father who looked for their wellbeing as they had thought but was actually a selfish and power-hoarding despot who kept the good things they needed for self-fulfillment away from them. The devil's alternative reality made Adam and Eve misinterpret God's power and will as restrictive instead of liberating. The result was acting contrary to God's will which resulted in shame, fear, and withdrawal from God (Gen. 3:8–10). The devil's lies still lead to the same result; believers pull away from the presence of the Holy Spirit in fear and shame.

I could share countless bad experiences—my own and those of friends. They were so many that I finally decided that I didn't want anything to do with spiritual experiences anymore. If this is how the Holy Spirit operated then thank you, but no thank you. I decided to be content with studying the Bible and live a solid—while perhaps a less exciting—Christian life. I didn't want to ever come close to the confusing mix of the Holy Spirit and human pride and sin again.

There are many understandable reasons for withdrawing from the Holy Spirit. It is a defense mechanism that we use if we have had bad or no experiences of the Spirit. If any of these reasons I mentioned—or a mix of them—apply to you, I want you to know that God doesn't judge you (and neither do I). My plea—and I believe is God's too—is not to stay this way; don't surrender to our fears and settle in the dry and quiet zone of withdrawing from the Holy Spirit. Sure, it might seem like a safe space but there is no real life there either. I know. I've been there. Withdrawing from the water and air of the Spirit will only result in

spiritual dryness. To save ourselves from being hurt by withdrawing from the Spirit is like wanting to shield a plant from heavy rain and strong winds so we place it too far away only to see it slowly wither away.

## Four Reasons Not to Fear the Holy Spirit

I want to share four biblical reasons that have helped me again want to draw close to the Spirit and to live in a worldview open to the life and activity of the Spirit. These truths have brought healing to my pneumaphobia and I have seen how they healed others. When we take them in, these biblical insights will quench the fear of the Spirit and can help us open up to keep ourselves "fueled and aflame" (Rom. 12:11 The Message). We can look at them as matches that reignite our passion for the Spirit.



### 1. The Spirit of Jesus

The most important reason why we should not fear the Holy Spirit is that the Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus. The New Testament shows the close relationship between Jesus and the Spirit by naming the Spirit the Spirit of Jesus:

**“When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to” (Acts 16:7 NIV, emphasis added).**

**“For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:19 NKJV, emphasis added).**

**“searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit**

**of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow” (1 Peter 1:11 NKJV, emphasis added).**

Calling the Spirit “the Spirit of Jesus” does in no way deny the personhood of the Spirit. The Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. Rather, what this title does is show the close relationship between Jesus and the Spirit. And this is extremely helpful when it comes to understanding more of how the Spirit works. Let me explain.

To call the Spirit the Spirit of Jesus means that what the Spirit does will be focused on Jesus and take on the character of Jesus. These are wonderful truths. Whatever the Spirit is doing will make Jesus more real and relevant. The work of the Spirit is Jesus-centered. It is to make Jesus’ presence, teaching, life, power, and kingship known. Whenever something is claimed to be a work of the Spirit, we can test it by how Jesus-centered it is and if Jesus is being glorified through it. Jesus said that the Spirit will testify and glory him.

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

**“He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you” (John 16:14 NKJV).**

The insight that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus shows us that the work of the Spirit will carry “the perfume of Jesus”, so to speak. The Holy Spirit will glorify Jesus as the true Lord and King. Listen to these Scriptures:

**“Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3 NKJV).**

**“By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is**

**of God” (1 John 4:2 NKJV).**

Why is this so helpful? Because this will make us relax; if we know and love Jesus, we will know and love the Spirit. By knowing Jesus, we already know the Spirit. Jesus said so:

**“the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you” (John 14:17 NKJV).**

How can Jesus say that they already knew the Spirit? Because they knew Jesus. The Spirit who was upon Jesus since birth and baptism was known to the disciples through him. This very close relationship between Jesus and the Spirit is why Jesus called the Spirit “another helper”:

**“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever” (John 14:16 NKJV).**

This qualitative similarity between Jesus and the Spirit will make us relax. We are not opening ourselves to a strange fire that can hurt us, to an unfamiliar tempest that can drive us anywhere.

The Spirit will ignite a passion for Jesus and drive us to Jesus (albeit in sometimes unpredictable ways for sure). The Spirit glorifies Jesus and makes us more Jesus-like. Who doesn't want that? The prayer “more of Jesus” is actually a prayer for more of the Holy Spirit, as it is through the Spirit we encounter Jesus. And likewise, the prayer for more of the Spirit is a prayer for more of Jesus.

If you, like me, have had strange and bad spiritual experiences in the past and seen corruption among anointed Christian leaders, you can easily get disillusioned and feel that it is no longer worth it to be open to the Spirit. How do we know if something is of the Spirit or not? What if we get led astray by either human flesh or even demonic powers? When we understand that the Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus, we can let down our guard and make ourselves vulnerable to the Spirit—that starts a

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wonderful process of renewal.

## 2. The Spirit of Love

The second reason why we don't have to be afraid of the Holy Spirit is that the Spirit is the Spirit of love. Listen to this Scripture:

**“Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Romans 5:5 NKJV).**

God is love (1 John 4:8) and the Spirit fills us with God's love. Love is the most important fruit of the Holy Spirit, first on the list in Galatians 5:22, and the “excellent way” (1 Cor. 12:31) of living the Spirit-empowered, charismatic life (see 1 Cor. 12–14).

Where the Spirit of God is moving, love is always present. Love is the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in manifestation. It is wonderful to know that where the Spirit is moving, God's love is made real.

Throughout much of church history, a metaphor for the work of the Spirit is as the bond of love between God the Father and God the Son (i.e., Jesus). This highlights the Spirit's role in the unity, self-giving, and sacrificial love of the Trinity. This is truly the most wonderful mystery.

The Spirit is spoken of in the Bible in relationship with God's face (see Ezek. 39:29; Ps. 104:29–30). This helps us to understand the role of the Spirit as God's loving and affirming face turned toward us, shining over us. When this truth enters our hearts, we will be quick to open up to be exposed to more of the Spirit— like a flower to the sun.

The Spirit and God's grace are also closely related in the Bible. There is no space to get into the details here, but the Spirit is even called “the Spirit of grace” (Heb. 10:29). So when we open ourselves to the Spirit, we experience the shining face of the Father turned toward us, flooding

our life with grace and love. When we realize that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of love, it drives out all fear because, as 1 John 4:18 says, there is “no fear in love”.

When we invite the Spirit, we open ourselves for an infilling of God's love. William Seymore, the African American early Pentecostal pioneer who was instrumental in the revival at Azusa Street in Los Angeles, USA, in the early 1900s spoke of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a baptism of love. That's a wonderful perspective. He also spoke about how love was the greatest sign of being filled with the Spirit.

Who wouldn't want more of God's love in their life? To experience how much God loves us and also to be a vessel of God's love to the world is the work of the Spirit.

Many people are uncertain whether God really loves them or not. They are anxious that if they don't tick all the right boxes, so to speak, God will withhold His love for them. For others, God's love remains a theological and abstract idea that has no experiential ground.

Such people need to be immersed, saturated, yes baptized, into God's love

by the Spirit.

For those who are afraid that they might lose their face if they open themselves to the Spirit, the insight that the Spirit is the Spirit of love will put such anxieties at ease. The Spirit is God's love in action; we can never be in safer, kinder, more loving hands.

A good definition of love is to look for the other's welfare for their own sake. This is what the Spirit does: the Spirit looks for our welfare for our sake. It takes trust to believe this. But when we do, our life will open to the world of the Spirit in a new way. Not only will we experience the love of God in greater dimensions but we will be a receptacle of love to the world. The Spirit will not put us into awkward situations that leave scars in our souls and make us say and do things that will bring us nightmares later in life. I have something to say about the aspect of risk-taking and

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that the Spirit will not guard our pride and status but I come back to that later. Here I want to hammer the point that the Spirit is fully committed to our eternal good.

### 3. The Spirit of Life

The third reason why we mustn't withdraw from the Holy Spirit is that the Spirit is the Spirit of life. The Bible calls the Holy Spirit the Spirit of life and speaks of the work of the Spirit as life-giving. Listen to these Scriptures:

**“because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2 NIV, emphasis added).**

**“who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Corinthians 3:6 NKJV, emphasis added).**

We need to know that the work of the Spirit didn't begin with Jesus or at Pentecost. The Spirit was part of birthing creation to life (Gen. 1:2), giving life to Adam (Gen. 2:7), forming Jesus in Mary's womb (Luke 1:35), raising Jesus to life (Rom. 8:11), births anew those who trust in Jesus (John 3:5), and will one day rise those who belong to him (Rom. 8:23). The mission and work of the Spirit are to bring the life of God into creation (Ps. 104:30) and one day bring creation into the new creation, where death will be swallowed up by life (2 Cor. 5:4). The work of the Spirit is to birth, sustain, renew, and resurrect life. Take a moment and meditate—i.e., fill your mind and heart prayerfully with these Scriptures.

**“The palace and the city will be deserted, and busy towns will be empty. Wild donkeys will frolic and flocks will graze in the empty forts and watchtowers until at last the Spirit is poured out on us from heaven. Then the wilderness will become a fertile field, and the fertile field will yield bountiful crops. Justice will rule in the wilderness and righteousness in the fertile field. And this righteousness will bring**

**peace. Yes, it will bring quietness and confidence forever. My people will live in safety, quietly at home. They will be at rest” (Isaiah 32:14–18 NLT, emphasis added).**

**“But now, listen to me, Jacob my servant, Israel my chosen one. The Lord who made you and helps you says: Do not be afraid, O Jacob, my servant, O dear Israel, my chosen one. For I will pour out water to quench your thirst and to irrigate your parched fields. And I will pour out my Spirit on your descendants, and my blessing on your children. They will thrive like**

**watered grass, like willows on a riverbank. Some will proudly claim, ‘I belong to the Lord.’ Others will say, ‘I am a descendant of Jacob.’ Some will write the Lord’s name on their hands and will take the name of Israel as their own” (Isaiah 44:1–5 NLT, emphasis added).**

These two narratives from Isaiah show us how the work of the Spirit is to bring newness of life, flourishing, fruitfulness, peace, and not to forget, justice. This is what we open ourselves to when we invite the Spirit.

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The Spirit is so much more than just a few emotional experiences, like getting some goosebumps in a revival meeting or getting a warm sensation when somebody prays for you (all those things are good of course, and should not be despised—we need them too). What I want you to see is how the Spirit is at work to flood the world with the life of God.

Because of this life-giving work of the Spirit, Christian theology has throughout the centuries spoken of the Spirit as “Lord and giver of life”.

This life giving work of the Spirit helps us to realize that when we invite the Holy Spirit into our lifeworld and when we hunger for more of the Spirit, we simply seek more of life itself. We all need oxygen and water for immediate survival. The Spirit is the fresh air and the renewing water of God to us. It is through the Spirit that we experience the abundant life that Jesus came to give (John 10:10).

Some things in life matter little if we embrace them or reject them. For example, whether we watch sports or not or whether we like jack fruit or not (I don't—Yuck!). But not so with the Holy Spirit. We have to understand that the Spirit belongs to the absolute essentials of life itself. When we realize this, we see how withdrawing from the Spirit is a form of self-harm; it is like going on a hunger strike.

People always seek more of life; they seek remedies for sicknesses, avoid dangers, and so on. It is ingrained in people to love life (unless they suffer from severe depression or are tormented by evil spirits). We need to understand that the Spirit is the giver of life. To fear the Spirit is to fear life itself; to quench the Spirit is to quench life. The choice is quite simple.

## 4. The Spirit of Truth

The fourth and last reason why we mustn't fear the Holy Spirit is that the Spirit is the Spirit of truth. Jesus said this,

**“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come” (John 16:13 NKJV).**

A helpful way to think about truth is reality. The Spirit will show us how the world is, how our life is and how the world of God is. In other words, the Spirit of truth will guide us into the really-real world of God. As the only reliable guide, the Spirit is there to give us light and direction, to help us discern what is truth and what are lies so that we can live in reality.

There are many lies and deceptions in this world. On a global scale, we realize how right Paul was in saying that

**“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to**

**deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons” (1 Timothy 4:1 NKJV).**

We live in what is called a “post-truth” age, where alternative facts and conspiracy theories shape the worldview of many. People are frustrated by how politicians, media, businesses, and other powerful players in this world have agendas that they seek to instill in people, often by the use of unconscious influences that we are not fully aware of. Deep down we know that we are being taken advantage of. This is certainly not the whole picture as there are many good people, institutions, businesses, and politicians out there. But the exceptions do not negate the fact we are like lambs among wolves and often these wolves come dressed in sheep clothing. The major question is who we can trust to look out for our good? Who is telling us like it really is and as it really happened? Who is a reliable guide that leads without thoughts of self-gain?

In the midst of this, we also begin to realize that our perspective is limited and that how we understand the world might not be how the world actually is.

We become aware of our own unspoken, underlying biases and preferences that color our vision and influence our desires and actions. The world becomes a very complex place and making choices and setting goals are truly difficult. We need a clear vision. For this, we must draw closer to the Spirit of truth. The Spirit gives the freedom of a clear vision (see 2 Cor. 3–4) and doesn't play loose with the truth. We can fully trust how the Spirit leads.

On a personal level, we face dishonesty and betrayal. Have you ever been deceived by someone? Maybe somebody close to you didn't keep a promise, cheated on you, or backstabbed you. This happens even among believers. At one time I entrusted a fellow minister with influence and responsibility in the ministry only to later find out that I had been cheated and that much of his life was a fabrication. Somebody said that among every twelve disciples there is a Judas Iscariot. I'd hate to think that that is a correct percentage (just do the math!) but at least it is a reminder that, as Paul said, there is great suffering to

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encounter “false believers” (2 Cor. 11:26). We live in a world of broken promises, manipulation, and dishonesty. We do ourselves great harm by withdrawing from the Spirit of truth.

Some keep away from the Holy Spirit because they are afraid of being deceived, or of encountering evil spirits. We don't have to be afraid. The Spirit of truth is genuine, not counterfeit. When we seek God in a pure desire for the Holy Spirit, the Father will not allow us to get a snake—He has explicitly promised that we will get the genuine gift and not anything counterfeit or harmful:

**“If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? <sup>12</sup>Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup>If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” (Luke 11:11–13 NKJV).**

We can confidently open ourselves to the Spirit as the Spirit is the Spirit of truth.

When we let the four truths that the Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of love, the Spirit of life, and the Spirit of truth truly sink in, it will be like a balm to our wounded souls and fuel our hunger.

## Faith Faces the Risk

There is an underlying question I need to address before we close. I've touched on it briefly above but need to speak to it here and it concerns the element of risk when opening up for the Spirit. I need to be honest with you: being open to the Spirit involves taking a risk. Life might (and probably will) take unexpected directions as the Spirit moves in sudden and unpredictable ways. Jesus already warned us that “the Spirit moves where the Spirit wills” (John 3:8, my translation). However, and this is where all I've said above comes in, since the Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of love, the Spirit of life, and the Spirit of truth what do we have to fear, really? We only risk losing what does not benefit us in the long run anyway.

The Christian life—all of life, actually—involves degrees of risk. Think of it. Breathing, the most common activity we always do, involves risks: We can catch a harmful virus, or



even worse, swallow a fly! Or somebody might notice our bad breath. Taking the bus to the supermarket contains several risks. Reaching new academic goals involves risks. Pursuing our relationship goals involves risks. Asking somebody to marry us is taking a huge risk of being rejected (unless you play it as safe as I did and somehow asked Emelie to marry me without really asking: "Let's say that if I, kind of, would ask you to marry me, would you perhaps, kind of, say yes?" I've already told you that my major fear was losing face). Anytime we want to go to another place we have to overcome the potential risks involved. We know what we got but we don't know what we will get. This on its own can paralyze people and keep them from taking a risk.

Imagine if Jesus would have calculated the risks and played it safe. We would still be alienated from the life and presence of God and lost in our sins. "Not my will, yours be done" (Luke 22:42 NKJV) is the greatest risk-taking prayer we can pray. God's love drives Him to take the

great risk of being rejected by His creation. There is much to say here but my main point is that opening ourselves to the Spirit involves a risk. We need to know that God has not taken the risk out of walking with Him. We just can't get away from that. But this is where faith comes in; we are aware of the risks involved but our faith in God is stronger than the potential losses we are afraid of. If we really believe that the Spirit drawing us closer to Jesus, making His presence and character known to us, drawing us into the love of God and making us partake of the life of God, and leading us into truth if we really believed that, then what are we waiting for? Our response can only be a passionate cry: "welcome Holy Spirit. I want more of you".

**There is much more to say about the Holy Spirit. Check out the other teachings of Dr. Mikael Stenhammar on this and other subjects.**

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