



Get This Right!

What Has Your Attention Right Now?

Many years ago God called me into full-time Christian work. I had spent three years studying chemistry in college preparing for what I hoped to be a career in the medical field. However, God flipped my life around and I needed to find a Christian college to attend, a school that would best prepare me for my life work. The problem was that I had no idea where I should go; I knew almost nothing about any Christian colleges anywhere and I could not just fly about the country visiting them. I got an information sheet while at a conference in New Mexico that listed Baptist Colleges in the U.S. and the contact information for them. What I needed was the Holy Spirit to guide me. Even as young as I was in my life with God, I knew it was critical that I attend a college that the Lord had for me and not just some random university that seemed like a good fit. Have you ever been in a spot like that, where you need the Holy Spirit to show you the way and you really want Him to lead you? Many have gotten so used to just doing things on their own without any Holy Spirit direction that it seems a bit odd to consider having the Holy Spirit lead the way for them, but it is the most fabulous and valuable way to live. As it turned out, the Holy Spirit did point me in the right direction, and I had the time of my life at the school He guided me toward.

We live in an age when many Christians are so distant from the Holy Spirit, they are not really even aware of His presence. Plenty of pastors and Christian leaders are in the same situation. To live without any personal closeness to the Holy Spirit is like living on the streets when you have inherited a beautiful home perfectly suited for you. If we have put our trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior there is so much joy and peace and wisdom available to us when we are close to the Holy Spirit...we just need to want it; be willing to do what it takes to have it. The question is, "Are you willing to pay the price to be close to the Holy Spirit?"

The Apostle Paul made a fascinating statement. **May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.** (2 Corinthians 13:14 NIV) From Jesus Christ comes grace. From God the Father we have love. With the Holy Spirit comes fellowship. I want us to zero in on that last point. We can have fellowship with the Holy Spirit. The term fellowship is the translation of a Greek term frequently found in the original language of the Bible. Koinonia can be rendered "oneness", "togetherness" or of course "fellowship". It has the idea of sharing. The Holy Spirit makes Himself available to you so you can grow close together, Imagine that! God actually chooses to be your friend and even more than that, He wants to share His life with you. The potential here is limitless; the Holy Spirit and His infinite love, peace, and wisdom a part of you. The problem many of us face, and this may be true of you, is we frequently shut down our relationship with the Holy Spirit by our actions.

Listen to what the Apostle Paul warns. **And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.** (Ephesians 4:30 NIV) The term translated "grieve" means to distress, cause pain, or vex. It is strange to think of this. Can we actually bring pain to the Holy Spirit? It is clearly the case. Many in the Bible have done so. King David and King Saul were just a few. For them it was disastrous. What happens is that we become insensitive to the Holy Spirit when we grieve Him. He is still there, keeping us safe for the day we enter heaven but, we just do not feel Him, we do not hear Him guiding us, do not find His power available to us and His joy there. Far too many Christians are miserable people: depressed, angry,

discouraged and lacking any real evidence of having God in their lives simply because they have grieved the Holy Spirit.

How can you keep the Holy Spirit active and working powerfully in you? Paul tells us. **Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.** (Ephesians 4:32 NIV) If you want heaven, want eternal life, want God to save you, why would you not want all of the goodness and strength of God working in you at optimal levels? Why would you not want His friendship all the time? Of course you would. If you do not want to grieve the Holy Spirit, here is what you do. You are kind to others. Kindness seems to be slipping from our society. We hardly notice one another, let alone act kindly. Kindness in this context means to be gracious, obliging, useful. If you want to stay close to the Holy Spirit and all His strength and joy, notice people who could use your help. Rather than ignoring them or pretending you do not see them and their needs, say something encouraging, promote their cause, give them support. Maybe it means a helping hand, some time to listen, some financial support, taking their heavy load off their shoulders. I have been doing video devotionals lately and it sure means the world to me when someone says, "Hey I watched the video! Thanks." It makes my day. I imagine it pleases the Holy Spirit too!! You can make life so much better for others if you just respond with kindness to what you see. The reward may be in a fresh infusion of the Holy Spirit in your life!

If you want to have the Holy Spirit close to you, be compassionate. This is the opposite of being judgmental or critical. Anyone can find fault with others. Satan is great at it! It is much different with compassion. Compassion is almost supernatural, heavenly. The word translated compassionate describes a lifestyle, a regular way of seeing things. Compassionate people overlook the flaws in others. They do not take offence, get bent out of shape or blow up on others. They see the handiwork of God in each person and give room to God to make the needed corrections. Compassionate people recognize we all make mistakes, all are sinners and need a pass when we blow it. I realize that laws need to be enforced and tickets issued to keep people from driving wildly and risking the lives of others. It sure felt good though when I got pulled over for speeding and the officer gave me a warning rather than the ticket I deserved. You would have felt the same way and compassion is what it looks like when you give someone a pass rather than what that person deserves.

Forgiveness is the third way we keep the Holy Spirit actively working in us. Just like God has forgiven you, if you want to be close to the Holy Spirit, you too forgive others. This is more than compassion, it is actually wiping the slate clean, removing the offence from your heart. If you want the power and joy and peace the Holy Spirit has for you, if you want His guidance and protection, you must forgive. Hold on to the grudge, the bitterness, the anger, and you will see you have nothing coming to you from the Holy Spirit. You are on your own. Forgive and the Holy Spirit is filling you, making your life abundant and full of victory.

Author R. T. Kendall has one of the most wonderful explanations of how forgiveness operates. 1. When you forgive, you stop telling anyone what the person did. 2. You do not let the person you forgave be nervous or afraid around you. 3. You do not let the person feel guilty but rather you overlook what the person did even if that person does not know what he or she has done wrong. Remember of course what Jesus did on the cross. 4. Let the person save face by not bringing up the sin to others. 5. Accept the matter of total forgiveness as a permanent lifestyle—you do it today and a year from now and ten years from now. 6. You bless the person. When you can sincerely pray for the person to be blessed, to be successful and not punished and do this from your heart, you will have forgiven.

You can make the Holy Spirit silent for you, cut off His power and help but if you are smart, you will stay as close to Him as possible, not letting anything get in the way. I love the account of Peter and John walking through the Temple gate and a man who had been crippled from birth, who every day was put there by friends to beg was noticed by Peter and John. They had probably seen him hundreds of times before but never reacted to him there. This time though Peter and John looked straight at him. Why did they notice him this time? Because the Holy Spirit pointed him out. The Spirit told them what to do too! Peter immediately gave

the man orders from the Holy Spirit. Get up and walk. The man did too! You might not be used by the Holy Spirit to heal those you meet but who knows what great works God might do through you if the Holy Spirit is close and an active part of your life!