

## WHY WE NEED THE HOLY SPIRIT

### JOHN 20:19-23

Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you." Now when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit..."

The wind is one of the most mysterious, yet powerful forces in nature. Gale force winds can howl and twist... *or* the wind can blow as a soft and gentle breeze.

*And we use the wind... We need the wind...*

When you jump out of the shower, and you're in a hurry, and you don't have time to let your hair dry on its own - you use the wind to blow it dry... When you dust off the driveway you crank up the leaf blower. It draws a robust gust of wind that blasts away the debris...

At times the Holy Spirit is a boisterous wind. He sweeps in to *clean us up and blow us off*. God's Spirit moves in gusts, and flurries, and serious squalls...

At other times the Holy Spirit is like a calm and gentle breeze. He moves among us in refreshing ways.

*Either way, just as we need the wind, we need the Holy Spirit. Like a kite on a balmy day... or a parasail on a glassy lake... the Christian who doesn't catch a gust of the Spirit is grounded. We'll never set sail!*

The event that occurs in John 20:22 takes place just after Jesus' resurrection. The living Lord breathed on His disciples, and told them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

One of the idioms the Bible uses for the Holy Spirit is "breath" or "wind." The word "Spirit" in both the Greek language, ("pneuma"), and in the Hebrew, ("ruach"), gets translated into the same word... "wind."

I like how one paraphrase renders verse 22, "(Jesus) took a deep breath and breathed into them. "Receive the Holy Spirit," He said." Notice, "He took a deep breath" Jesus drew from deep within, and gave to His disciples something of Himself. *What an incredible gift!*

What happened in the Upper Room that evening had no resemblance whatsoever to the antics you see on Christian television or at a Benny Hinn rally. Jesus was not some prima-donna preacher prancing across the stage blowing on people and knocking them over.

*This is not what happened...* Jesus wasn't wooing the crowd into a hyper-emotional state - or playing on heightened expectations... *These disciples had been tempered by reality. They'd just gone through the fire.*

They'd just come out of *the shadows of fear and the fields of failure*. For the last three days these defeated men had felt dead inside. Peter betrayed the Lord. The others denied Him. They're all assuming, "If Jesus is alive, He won't have anything to do with us now."

But Jesus appears to these men behind closed doors, and He draws from deep within - then breathes on His disciples, and says, *“Receive the Holy Spirit.”*

Hey, this is not *manipulation*. It’s true *impartation*.

There is no show or showmanship here. Jesus isn’t puffed up with pride or full of hot air. This isn’t a case of *bad breath*. Jesus is taking something from deep within Himself, and He’s putting it deep within His disciples. As the psalmist describes it, *“deep calls unto deep.”*

Jesus is forming a heart connection with His men.

What Jesus does in John 20 is similar to what God did at the original creation. Genesis 2:7 tells us, *“The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”* God gave Adam the gift of life.

God transmitted the life that was in Him, and put it into the man.... And just as God transmitted *physical life* to Adam, here Jesus transmits *spiritual life* to His disciples. He breathes into them something of Himself.

When my son, Nick, was younger I mentioned to him that he should go out for HS wrestling. I thought with his build and athleticism he’d make a champion wrestler. *Of course, He was opposed to the idea...*

When Nick thought of the sport of wrestling all he could envision was *fat guys in tights - painted faces and Wrestle Mania*. In his mind he saw the fake, and the phony, and the hype - and wanted no part of it.

*And with that as the model, I don't blame him. Professional Wrassling gives real wrestling a bad rap.*

Wrasslin' is staged entertainment. It's *showmanship* not *substance*. It's *scripted outcomes* not *competitive effort*. To appreciate the sport of *wrestling* I needed to take my son to a real High School or College match, and let him witness a genuine wrestling event.

And this is how some folks respond when they hear of the Holy Spirit. They've seen the sideshows and abuses - *wrasslin* not *real wrestling*. And in response, **“they've thrown the baby out with the bathwater.”**

I believe most Christians want a *deeper experience with God* - they just don't want to go off *the deep end*.

They need to receive the Holy Spirit, *but ignorance, or misconception, or fear keeps them from opening up*.

*Here's what happens...* We correctly assume the *Holy Spirit* will make us you *more holy* and *more spiritual* - then we see folks supposedly under the sway of the Spirit acting *more carnal* and *less spiritual*...

I want to be *godly*, not *goofy*!... *I'm goofy enough as it is*... People get turned-off by the antics of folks who claim to be spiritual, while acting very unspiritual.

What's needed in churches today is a *genuine* out-pouring of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

What happened in our text - between Jesus and His disciples - wasn't *theatrics*, it was *theology* in the truest sense. **This was the study of God through the experience**

*of God...* The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus - and thus, how can we *know Jesus*, and *walk with Jesus*, and *serve Jesus - fully and effectively* - without receiving the influence of the Holy Spirit?

Here Jesus transmits *His life, His love, His power* to His disciples - *through the Holy Spirit*. And it's my prayer that our Lord Jesus will continue to breathe on us today - *for we all desperately need the Holy Spirit!*

Before Jesus was crucified He spoke to His disciples about the work and ministry of the coming Holy Spirit.

In John 14:17 Jesus told His followers that the Holy Spirit was **with them**. The Spirit of God had convicted them of their sin and had drawn them to the Savior...

Here in John 20 they believe in the risen Christ - thus, meeting the requirements of salvation.

As a result, Jesus breathes on them, and the Holy Spirit comes to dwell **in them**. Though Jesus was about to ascend to heaven, and leave them physically, He would forever be linked to His disciples spiritually.

*But Jesus wasn't done...* For a few weeks later at the Feast of Pentecost He got out the leaf blower, and breathed on His disciples again... *with a mighty gust!*

In Acts 2 we're told flickers of fire appeared over the heads of His disciples - and the people in the room heard the audible sound of a rushing, mighty wind...

The Amplified V calls it, **"a violent tempest blast..."**

This is not a mild breeze that leaves these believers and their world unaltered. This is a bold wind - a hurricane that blows **upon them** - picks up the pieces of their lives - then totally rearranges their way of living.

In John 20 Jesus breathes gently on His disciples the Holy Spirit... In contrast, Acts 2 is a windstorm. He breathes the *same Spirit* upon the *same people* but in a *different way* - this time with gale force intensity...

Sometimes the Spirit comes gently. At other times He blows through the house like a hurricane. *But God's word to us is always the same "receive the Holy Spirit."*

I believe Jesus continually breathes fresh breath on and into His Church. *"Receive the Holy Spirit,"* isn't a one time command. It's an attitude. It's the permanent posture we should maintain toward the Holy Spirit. Our approach to Him should always be one of *receiving*...

2 Samuel 5 provides a wonderful analogy that depicts the Holy Spirit as the wind. When the Philistine army heard that David had replaced Saul as king of Israel they tried to take advantage of the change in administrations. Perhaps they could catch Israel with their guard down... use the element of surprise...

So they deployed troops to the Valley of Rephaim.

When David heard about it, he prayed and inquired of the Lord, *"Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand?"* God said, *"Go up, for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into Your hand."*

And true to God's word - that's exactly what happened - David thoroughly routed the Philistines.

But the Philistines were slow learners.

Once they had recovered they tried the same tactic. Again, they deployed troops to the Valley of Rephaim.

Understand, this is the **same enemy - same theater of conflict - same strategy - same circumstances - same time frame...** *What would you have done?*

To me, this looks like a no-brainer. I've already prayed about these exact circumstances - why would God's answer be any different this time than last? I would've assumed God would give me the very same marching orders... *but I would have assumed wrong.*

Thankfully, David did not assume.

Again he inquired of the Lord, and God answered him, "You shall not go up; circle around behind them, and come upon them in front of the mulberry trees.

And it shall be, when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall advance quickly. For then the LORD will go out before you to strike the camp of the Philistines."

David obeyed, and again drove back the Philistines.

But the story illustrates our tendency...

Humans look for patterns to mimic - formulas to follow. We want a copy of the blueprints. We look for a template to lay over a given situation, so we'll know exactly the steps we can take to solve the problem.

*Just trace the lines* and the outcome is guaranteed.

We do this as Christians... We follow the *six steps* to victory - or the *three keys* to being an effective witness.

Even pastors do this... They travel to a church that's growing, and study its behavior, assuming they can learn the secret formula. *There's only one problem...*

## **There is no secret formula.**

David was given two different strategies for the same circumstances. Rather than led through a formula, God told David *to wait on the wind - on the Holy Spirit!*

The Lord instructed David to circle behind the enemy and wait for the sound of marching in the treetops - or literally, *the wind rustling the tops of the mulberries...*

*The answer my friend, was blowing in the wind....*

And if you want to *walk in spiritual victory - and be a winsome witness - and win battles for Jesus* don't look for a program, or a plan, or a pattern... *follow a person.*

Here's the secret formula... *we need the Holy Spirit.*

God doesn't come in an elixir.

God isn't doled out in a pill.

God won't be condensed to a can - or consumed in a tablet. **He definitely doesn't fit in a box!** God is Spirit, and following the Spirit is like listening to the wind.

In John 3:8 Jesus said to Rabbi Nicodemus, "**The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.**"

Jesus is saying that the movements, and ways, and workings of the Holy Spirit are as unpredictable - and as unexpected - as changes in the wind currents.

Watch a flag over a ball park on a windy day - the wind blows out one moment, then in - then right, then left - you're never sure which way the wind blows. The same is true of the Spirit. He has a mind of His own.



God's Spirit has His own agenda.

The Holy Spirit calls the shots, not you.

The Spirit of God does *what He wants - when He wants - and how He wants...* Our job is to follow.

If God did author formulas and programs it would still be *us* in control. And that's not what He wants...

You can't control the wind. It charts its own course.

And if we're depending on God's Spirit it's up to us to bend, and adapt, and adjust to Him - never vice versa.

A veteran Army paratrooper was addressing a group of new recruits. This particular soldier had just completed his 2000<sup>th</sup> military jump. After his talk, one of the new recruits asked the old pro how he'd gotten involved in parachuting. The veteran soldier replied...

*"I was an infantryman 15,000 feet in the air. We were scheduled to land, but the plane's engine blew out... I started jumping because I had no other choice."*

And this is why I need the Holy Spirit. *I have no other choice!* If I want to connect to heaven while on earth, and walk *with* God, and receive power *from* God, and live in the will *of* God, and be pleasing *to* God... it only occurs through the involvement of the Holy Spirit!

When Zerubbabel returned to Jerusalem with his skeleton crew of Jews to rebuild the Temple, God told the governor how the job would get done... *"not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD."*

A completed Temple would not be the result of man's muscle, or of human ingenuity. Zerubbabel's greatest effort and highest wisdom would not be enough.

*What was needed was a work of the Holy Spirit!*

Today, God is building two temples...

He's building **you** up as a Temple - and if you're going to be a strong and fit habitation for God - and offer pleasing sacrifices - it'll take a work of the Spirit.

But God is also building **us** up. He's taking us all and interconnecting us into a larger Temple. He wants to dwell in our midst and reveal Himself in our love for each other. *Church work also requires the Holy Spirit.*

Whether we're talking about what God wants to do *in us* personally, or *with us* corporately, the key is the Holy Spirit... *Yes, we desperately need the Holy Spirit.* Nothing of eternal value is done apart from His Spirit.

Kevin Fast is a Lutheran pastor and a strongman competitor from Ontario, Canada. On September 18, 2009, at a Canadian Air Force base, Pastor Kevin set his 9th Guinness *heavy pulling* World Record.

He strapped himself into a harness connected to a C17 Cargo plane, weighing 416,299 pounds.

With his sneakers digging into the runway he leaned forward, and with all his might, he started to pull. Kevin moved the airplane 8.8 meters, nearly 30 feet, in 1 minute and 16 seconds - setting the world record for **“the heaviest aircraft pulled by a human being.”**

It was an act of near superhuman strength.

But sadly Kevin's feat resembles the approach many pastors and churches have taken toward God's work.

Spreading the Gospel and planting churches is like that Cargo plane. The strength of a few extraordinary folk pull it along for short distances and brief intervals.

But there's a much easier way to move a C17 plane... just crank it up and take off... it can fly!

When God fires up our engines, and we get the wind of the Spirit under our wings - the Church soars! Now we're no longer inching along. *God's Spirit* enables *God's church* to fly on the wind of *God's power*.

Acts 19:1-2 tells the tragic story of **a church trying to serve God, without God**. When Paul first came to Ephesus he discovered the believers there were ignorant of the Holy Spirit. He asked them, **"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"** **So they said to him, 'We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.'** Talk about a desperate situation.

Imagine believers in Jesus, who have never even heard of the Holy Spirit! Here was a church paralyzed by their spiritual ignorance. They just didn't know!

The disciples at Ephesus loved Jesus. They wanted to obey Him and spread the Gospel. **They had a great commission, yet were plagued by a great omission.**

Here were a handful of believers attempting to convert and disciple a pagan city with no knowledge of the *person or power* of the Holy Spirit. What a strange situation... *Yet this is the plight of churches today!*

There's a lot of effort, but little power...

If you're like me, you don't want to be a powerless Christian, and you don't want to be part of a powerless Church. This is why we desperately need God's Spirit.

Let me elaborate for a minute about a danger in the Christian life that I believe applies to us - to sincere believers... *we can study the Scriptures and be accurate in our doctrine - we can memorize verses, and sniff out heresies - we can glory in the cross, and share our faith, and tithe our money - we can even keep our noses clean, and our hands out of trouble.*

We can live good, moral, spiritually innocuous lives.

We can do all the right stuff, yet miss out on the crux of Christianity. The Christian faith isn't just a creed to believe, or rules to keep. It's a person to experience!

Christianity is **experiential**. To know God and the fullness of His power is the Christian's birthright. This is the privilege of God's grace! It's the joy of our soul...

Psalm 34:8 baits us - even dares us - **"O taste and see that the Lord is good."** *You can savor God!*

Christianity is *rational*, but it's also *relational*.

It's *Scriptural*, but it's also *spiritual*.

It's *historical*, but it's also *mystical*.

We all need to be reminded, the Trinity is not, **"God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Bible."** *We need His Spirit* to permeate and propel us in all we do.

For twenty years, the great British preacher, Martin Lloyd-Jones excelled at expositional Bible teaching.

He labored to instill right doctrine in his church, but toward the end of his ministry he realized that his teaching had only produced *a dead orthodoxy*.

Lloyd-Jones began to emphasize experiential faith. He talked about revival and the baptism of the Spirit.

The truth is, we need both *the power of God's Spirit* and *the truth of God's Word - knowledge and might*.

I've heard it said, "A church that has the Word without the Spirit will dry up. A church that has the Spirit without the Word will blow up. But a church that has the Spirit working through the Word will grow up."

God's Word is like a fireplace. It provides a frame and grate that keeps the fire from burning the house.

But a fireplace by itself is cold, and hard, and worthless without the fire. Certainly Christians need a good fireplace, but we also need to pray for the *fire!*

It reminds me of the busy downtown attorney who was sitting at the red light in his fancy, new sports car.

A young boy rode up next to him on his moped. The boy wanted to talk, so the lawyer lowered his window.

"Hey, Mister, nice car. What kind is it?"

The lawyer snapped back, "A *Porsche*."

"How much does it cost?" "*Plenty*." "Is it fast?"

Just then the light turned green. The attorney dropped the car into gear and left the boy in the dust.

But as the Porsche accelerated the lawyer noticed the boy on the moped gaining on him - *zoom, the moped roared past him*. The lawyer couldn't believe his eyes. He hit the accelerator, and passed the moped.

Yet again, the moped sailed by him going twice as fast. The lawyer was stunned... Finally, he gunned it.

There's no way he was going to get outrun by a moped. But as he looked in his rear-view mirror he saw the moped accelerating faster and faster and faster...

He wondered, *what could be powering that moped?*

As the boy on the moped shot around him, the lawyer was so shocked he lost control of his car and steered into the boy. He ran the moped off the road.

The attorney jumped out to apologize, *"I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you. I just didn't think a scooter was that fast. Is there anything I can do to help you?"*

The kid on the moped looks up at the lawyer, and says, *"Well yes, can you unhook my backpack from your rear view mirror?"* And here's the moral of the story - *we're all just mopeds!* We have very little power.

But we can hook our backpack to the Holy Spirit and we can tap into a tremendous and awesome might.

On the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit blew through the Upper Room **upon** the disciples like *a heavenly hurricane*. Luke calls it, *"as a rushing, mighty wind."*

In my research for this message I discovered that hurricanes originate in a geographical area known as *The Doldrums*. It's a narrow belt of ocean with low pressure - little, if no, wind - and generally calm seas.

The doldrums lie near the equator - between the trade winds... In the Atlantic Ocean the doldrums are north of the equator, thus there're no hurricanes in the South Atlantic... In the Pacific, the doldrums are on both sides of the equator, thus typhoons can hit in either Northern or Southern Hemispheres. ***Ironically, all the windstorms originate in the middle of the doldrums.***

And let me say the same is true spiritually.

Fresh breezes of the Holy Spirit - new gusts of supernatural strength - heavenly hurricanes of revival - also start in what we would call the *doldrums* of life...

One day, a Christian, or group of Christians, decides they've wasted too much time in the spiritual doldrums.

They get honest before God. They admit their life is lacking - that they're living below what God intended!

*Their Christianity is powerless.*

*Their witness is listless.*

*Their service for Jesus has grown tedious.*

*Their spirituality has become monotonous.*

*Their morality seems meaningless.*

One day this person or persons wakes up floating in the doldrums. They admit their discontent, and become desperate enough to pray to God to send the wind!...

Here's what you and I need to realize, if we're in the doldrums this morning - *if our life has hit a lull* it only means we're in perfect position to catch a gust of wind!

The Holy Spirit starts His work, at *the point of our neediness*. God starts His movements in the doldrums.

The Bible tells us **we** do have certain obligations in our relationship with the Holy Spirit... *to be born of the Spirit - walk in the Spirit - be led by the Spirit - be filled with the Spirit - never grieve, or quench the Spirit...*

And we could spend a lot of time defining in detail these various commands. *Yet lest I make our responsibilities to the Spirit more complicated than they need be, just remember the Spirit is like the wind!...*

We don't see the wind - or *understand* the wind - and we certainly don't *control the wind*... but when God sends the wind, we can enjoy it! The wind is a mystery, but that doesn't stop me from utilizing it when it blows.

To me the key to benefiting from the wind is not in my understanding of it, or my unraveling its mystery - it's in *my willingness* to lift my sails in its direction.

When Jesus imparted the Holy Spirit He breathed on His disciples, and said, *“Receive the Holy Spirit.”*

He didn't say, *“Figure Me out, or decipher this, or understand that...”* It was simply, *“Receive the Spirit.”*

The key to our relationship with the Holy Spirit is not *our ability to decipher His ways*, but *our willingness to receive Him in*. Are you receptive to the Holy Spirit?

Once, after a Sunday AM service, a lady came up to me, and said simply, *“I am here today because I want to receive the Holy Spirit.”* *We prayed together. The Lord*



*breathed on her, and she received!* Jesus wants to impart His Holy Spirit to you if you'll be receptive...

I hope by now you realize - you need the Holy Spirit!

More than *a new car, or house, or job, or friend* - you need the Holy Spirit... He'll take you places no *car* can travel. He'll make you a *house* for God. He'll use your life for *eternal purposes*. He'll be *the best friend* you'll ever have. *In a million ways we need the Holy Spirit!*

You and I will always be like the little boy who brought just five loaves and two fish to Jesus. *That's all we'll ever bring...* You and I are incapable of miracles.

Our utmost is utterly insufficient.

Yet here's the good news... the Holy Spirit *takes up* where Jesus *leaves off*. The Lord can take our little and transform it into much! *Our meagerness sets up God's miracles...* This is why we need the Holy Spirit!

If you desire to live in *the light of God...*

And know *the truth of God...*

And possess *the life of God...*

And feel *the love of God...*

And sense *the presence of God...*

And reflect *the image of God...*

And live in *the will of God...*

And behold *the glory of God...*

And be fueled by *the power of God...*

And receive *spiritual gifts from God...*

And be *fruitful and effective for God*, then you need to depend on your relationship with *the Spirit of God*.

Let me close with a story about the great missionary to China, Hudson Taylor. Taylor was aboard a sailing ship bound for China when it lost its gust of wind and began drifting perilously close to the Cannibal Islands.

The captain didn't want to be on the native's menu that night – *the catch of the day at the Cannibal Cafe*'.

So he asked Hudson Taylor to pray for God to send a wind. Taylor asked the captain to raise the ship's sails. In the absence of a breeze the captain thought it was foolish. *Why raise your sails if there's no wind?*

But Hudson Taylor refused to pray and ask God for a wind until the captain had hoisted his sails. *Why pray if no one really believes God will answer?* Finally, the stubborn captain gave in and lifted the vessel's sails.

Hudson Taylor then prayed, and God sent the wind!

The moral of the story is clear... Don't expect Jesus to breathe His Spirit into your life if you're not willing to ask God, and be willing, and raise your sails of faith.

*Be open... Be humble... Be willing... Be receptive...*

Today, our Lord Jesus breathes upon us - and says to us... *“Receive the Holy Spirit...” Will we receive?*