



Peninsula City Church

Engaging the Gifts of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is speaking are you listening?

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The Holy Spirit is speaking are you listening?

An Introduction

Q. How do you go about getting answers on how to engage with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit?

Picture this, you are praying for someone or a situation and imagining what they or it could be like if the Holy Spirit intervened? You know those times, when things just aren't as they should be. You are lifting that person or situation before your Heavenly Father and asking Him for His will to be done. You pray and by faith you picture that lost person found, that sick person healed, that crisis addressed, or that question answered. Can you imagine Him using you as you connect Him to give you the right gift that is needed for that person or situation? We cannot imagine a person found or healed, or a situation fixed or even addressed. So, although our imaginations may be limited, the Holy Spirit's power and possibilities are not.

So, if you were to prayerfully use your imagination by faith, what is your imagination? By way of definition it has been said that it is,

“The act or power of forming a mental image of something not present to the senses or never before wholly perceived in reality. The creative ability to confront and deal with a problem, it is resourcefulness. It is the thinking or active mind.”¹

As pointed out above, we cannot imagine a person or situation fixed, or healed, or even addressed. But, we can trust the Holy Spirit to guide us and our faith drenched imagination as we creatively pray for His will to be done. That is, as we prayerfully and honestly humble ourselves before Him desiring only His will. In that context it has been said that,

“Our imaginations are involved in every area of our lives, in everything we do or say or are. It is no wonder that God is so intent upon recapturing them. Therefore, we must seek to understand the imagination biblically, that is, Christ-centeredly.

The imagination is the bridge between the heart and the mind, integrating both, allowing us to think/understand with our hearts and feel/emote with our minds. It is a vehicle for truth. Through the use of images, metaphors, stories and paradoxes that demand our attention, it calls for our interaction. The imagination is a powerful means for communicating truths about God, and so God shows an awesome regard for the imagination in His word.

Because we are called to creativity, a working, gut-level understanding of the imagination is vital. It can be our greatest strength or our greatest weakness. To harness the imagination, or better yet, to bring it under submission to Christ is something about which we don't talk or pray or do enough.”²

However, we do not need to fill our hearts and minds with just anything when praying for the Holy Spirit to intervene in someone's life, or a situation. We have God's Word and can fill our hearts and minds with it, so that the Holy Spirit can use it as we pray.

1. The Holy Spirit, the gifts and the Bible

Q. What role does the Holy Spirit play in helping us understand His gifts through Bible?

Some have called the Bible a manual for life. Whether this is the case or not, the Bible is still an important part of the life and prayer life of a Christ-follower. For those who are not Christ-followers they see other life material as manuals for their life. That is,

¹ “Full Definition of imagination.” <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/imagination> (7th November 2016).

² Card, Michael. *Scribbling in the Sand: Christ and Creativity*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002), 55

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“The manual is one of a kind. The Communists had their Manifesto. The Maoists had their Little Red Books. The Muslims have their Koran.”³

However, for Christ-followers,

“Only the Bible contains the writings taught not by human wisdom, but by the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:13). Only the Bible reveals ‘what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of humanity conceived, what God has prepared for those who love Him’ (1 Corinthians 2:9).”⁴

So, if the Bible is not merely an instructional manual, what is it? It is in fact, God’s Word. It is the Spiritual Word of God about Himself and His ways that have been given to humanity to know Him and His ways. God the Holy Spirit helps the reader to understand the Bible in their daily life.

In the section of 1 Corinthians chapter 2 Paul deals with what may be called “Wisdom from the Spirit, for doing His will.”

⁶ “Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are already doomed to pass away. ⁷ But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ But, as it stands written (in Is 64:4; 65:17),

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of humanity imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him.”

¹⁰ These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit constantly searches everything, even the deep things of God. ¹¹ For who knows a person’s thoughts except for the spirit of that person, which is in them? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand (come to know) the things freely grace given us by God. ¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit, fitly joining together Spirit-revealed truths with Spirit-taught words to those who are spiritual (Or interpreting spiritual truths in spiritual language, or comparing spiritual things with spiritual).

¹⁴ The natural (unregenerate) person of the highest intellectual capacity does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to them, and they are not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵ The spiritual person investigates (judges) all things, but is them self is not being probed (judged) by anyone. ¹⁶ “For who has understood (come to know experientially) the mind of the Lord so as to instruct them?” But as for us, we have Christ’s mind” (1 Cor 2:6-16).

God’s Spirit-revealed truth and the Spirit-taught words need to infuse our Spirit-led prayer. As we focus on the persons or situations that we are praying for. What is the current need, what is He doing, what does He want to do through me, what gift is needed in this instance? We need to let The Holy Spirit guide us as He leads us into what He is already doing. If the Spirit is constantly searching everything, even the deep things of God, then it is important for us to be listening to Him and obeying Him. The Father will reveal to us through the Holy Spirit what needs to be done and which gift is needed to do His will.

³ Piper, John. “How the Spirit Helps Us Understand.” <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/how-the-spirit-helps-us-understand> (7th November 2016).

⁴ Piper, John. “How the Spirit Helps Us Understand.” <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/how-the-spirit-helps-us-understand> (7th November 2016).

2. The Holy Spirit's gifts focus on the divine will

Q. What is your understanding of the Holy Spirit as you prayerfully read the Word of God to understand the gifts of the Spirit?

For many a Christ-follower the focus is on merely reading the Bible as a chore or devotional task. However, it is meant to be much more than that. It needs to be much more than that. So, how can we understand the things of the Spirit found in the Word of God? As it has been said about the Bible that,

“It contains the truth needed to win us over from the enemy to Christ, to deprogram our old thought patterns, to train us in strategies of righteousness, and to equip us with armour and weapons to defeat Satan and liberate his captives. But we have a natural aversion to this truth. Therefore, the work of the Holy Spirit is utterly indispensable as we make use of the Bible. But now we can see more clearly what this work of the Spirit is and what it isn't.

The work of the Spirit is not to tell us what the Bible means. That we must determine by a disciplined study of the text. The Spirit inspired these writings and He does not short-circuit them by whispering in our ear what they mean. When we pray for His help, we do not pray that He will spare us the hard work of rigorous reading and reflection. What we pray is that He would make us humble enough to welcome the truth. The work of the Spirit in helping us grasp the meaning of Christ's words is not to make study unnecessary but to make us radically open to receive what our study turns up, instead of twisting the text to justify our unwillingness to accept it.”⁵

We need to be creative in our use the gifts of the Holy Spirit. If that is the case, then we need to surrender our imagination to the Holy Spirit. We need to let Him guide our ways to creatively engage His gifts right where we have already been deployed. We have all been deployed somewhere, at school, work, in our neighbourhood or sports club etc. So, let Him recapture your imagination as His beautiful beloved child and use you where you have already been deployed. As the giver of the gifts, the Holy Spirit is looking for those who will be the conduit of those gifts to the world around them. It has rightly been said that,

“Jesus was the greatest preacher who ever lived. You only have to read the gospels once to see how Jesus captured the imaginations of all who came to hear Him. Jesus understood if you can capture one's imagination, it will take them on a glorious adventure and have far greater impact than a picture or video we try to show them. Jesus, through parables, led people on a journey of discovery and insight by using words and illustrations which got across the message He was trying to teach.”⁶

Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit to creatively do the will of the Father passing on the supernatural gifts to those around Him. He had the greatest imagination of anyone that has ever lived. We need to rely on the Holy Spirit, because we are so weak and unimaginative to be able to the Father's will. The Holy Spirit knows the Father's Word and will that's why He can guide us in our prayer to more fruitfully engage with the gifts of the Spirit. As Paul said,

²⁶ “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God” (Rom 8:26-27 ESV).

⁵ Piper, John. “How the Spirit Helps Us Understand.” <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/how-the-spirit-helps-us-understand> (13th September 2016).

⁶ “Preaching and the Power of Imagination.” <http://gregatkinson.com/preaching-and-the-power-of-imagination/> (7th November 2016).

Some concluding thoughts

So, coming back to the opening question,

Q. How do you go about getting answers on how to engage with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit?

As Christ-followers we can be so unimaginative when it comes to getting answers regarding engaging with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. We would sooner go it alone instead of asking the Holy Spirit to guide us according to the will of God. We need to admit and accept that we need God's Spirit-revealed truth and the Spirit-taught words infusing our prayer. Otherwise we simply become predictable and self-led in our efforts to engage the gifts of the Spirit.

So, are you praying for someone, or a situation at the moment? Is your prayer faith-filled as you imagine what they or it could be like if the Holy Spirit intervened? Maybe things aren't as they should be, but you see through the eye of faith that they could be far better. The Holy Spirit is speaking are you listening? It may be time that you trusted the Holy Spirit to guide your ways to creatively engage His gifts right where we have already been deployed. It may be time that you trusted the Holy Spirit to guide you and your imagination as you prayerfully and honestly humble yourselves before Him desiring only His will to be done. Some things to prayerfully think about,

- What role does the Holy Spirit play in helping you to understand His gifts through Bible?
- What is your understanding of the Holy Spirit as you prayerfully read the Word of God to understand the gifts of the Spirit?
- What do you need to willingly do to surrender your imagination to Him and be creative in using the gifts of the Holy Spirit?
- Are you ready to let Him guide your ways to engage His gifts where you have already been deployed? Why/why not?

The Lord said to Jeremiah in the context of Him restoring Israel,

“Call to me, and I will show you things that you could never dream or imagine” (Jer 33:3).

So within the context of engaging the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the saving of those around us where we have been deployed the Lord has said,

“Now to Him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine” (Eph 3:20 NRS)