

Stop Comparing Your Spirit Experience to Everyone Else's

The Spirit of Christ

Let me tell you about two people.

The first one believed. She was baptized. She has walked with God faithfully for years, quietly, steadily, showing up when it mattered. But she has never had a moment. No dramatic encounter she can point to and say, that's when it happened, that's when I knew the Spirit had come. She hears other believers talk about being filled, about being baptized in the Spirit as its own distinct experience, and something in her starts to wonder. Did I miss it? Is there something wrong with me? Is everyone else running on a power I never got issued?

The second one had that moment. Years after she first believed, something broke open in her, unmistakable, undeniable. She knew the Spirit had come in a way she'd never known before. And now, without meaning to, she measures everyone else by it. She wonders why the people around her haven't caught up. Why they seem so unmoved, so quiet, so unchanged.

Two people. Two very different questions underneath the same wondering. Have I really received Him? And is there something more I'm supposed to be living in?

Those are two different questions, and Scripture treats them differently, so let's pull them apart. The first has a firm answer. The second is where serious readers of Scripture have disagreed, and it matters to be clear about what the disagreement is, and what it isn't.

Let's start with the first question, because it is not in dispute.

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

ROMANS 8:9

Read that again. Paul isn't writing to a spiritual elite. He's writing to an entire church, and his assumption is total. If you belong to Christ, the Spirit is in you. Not might be. Not could be, if you find the right experience. Is.

First Corinthians chapter 12, verse 13 says it a different way.

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:13

All. Every single believer in that church, whatever their background, whatever their story, had already drunk of the one Spirit. This is the floor. Whatever else is true, this is true first: if you belong to Jesus, you already have Him. Not a partial Him. Not a starter version waiting to be upgraded. Him. That is how the Spirit comes to live in you. You are not waiting on Him to arrive.

But the New Testament speaks of something more, and it would be a mistake to flatten it.

After His resurrection, standing with His followers, Jesus said this.

And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.

LUKE 24:49

Stay. Don't go yet. These were people who had followed Him, who had watched Him die and seen Him alive again, and He tells them not to begin the mission until power arrives. And He says exactly what that power is for.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

ACTS 1:8

Power, for witness. No serious reader of Scripture disputes this. Jesus did not send His people into the world to speak of Him in their own strength, and the Spirit's empowering is not an optional extra for a church with a mission. Hold that firmly, because everything else we're about to say sits inside it.

So where does the disagreement come from? It's narrower than most people think. It isn't about whether this empowering is real, or whether we need it. It's about how it relates to the moment someone first believes. Is it the same moment, or can it be distinct? That question comes from places in the book of Acts that genuinely don't look the same.

In Acts chapter 10, verses 44 through 48, Peter is preaching to a Roman household, people who aren't even baptized yet. And this happens.

While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

ACTS 10:44-48

Notice the order. The Spirit falls first. Baptism comes after, almost as an afterthought, because the thing that mattered had already happened. Hearing and receiving come together.

But two chapters earlier, in Acts chapter 8, verses 14 through 17, something different happens.

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

ACTS 8:14-17

Here, the Samaritans had already believed. They had already been baptized. And the Spirit came later, only after Peter and John arrived and prayed. There's a gap. A real one, named plainly in the text.

So which is it? Some serious, careful readers of Scripture conclude that receiving the Spirit is what happens the moment someone believes, and that the Samaritans, and even the disciples waiting in Jerusalem, lived at unusual points in history when God was opening a new era, so their stories describe transitions rather than templates. Other equally serious readers look at the same book, and at those same disciples told to wait, and conclude there is a genuine empowering that God gives, sometimes at conversion and sometimes after, and that the pattern in Acts is more varied than a single moment can hold.

I'm not going to tell you which one wins. Not because I'm dodging it, but because faithful people who love Scripture and have given their lives to studying it land on both sides of this, and you deserve to know that clearly rather than have it handed to you as settled when it isn't.

But notice what both sides keep standing on. The Spirit lives in every believer. And the Spirit's power for witness is real and needed. Whichever way you read the timing, no one is saying you should go without Him.

And here is what I most want you to see, because it matters for your life.

Both of the people I told you about at the start have the same problem. Not the same view. The same problem. Both of them are measuring their walk with God against someone else's experience. One is afraid she's missing something because

others describe it so vividly. The other has made hers the standard for everyone around her. And both of them have let comparison replace the question Scripture actually keeps asking.

The Spirit was never given so you could hold a certain kind of story. He is given to change you and to empower you, and both can be seen.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

GALATIANS 5:22-23

That's the evidence. Not a memory you can locate. A life being slowly, steadily reshaped, and a growing courage to speak of Jesus.

So start with what you have actually experienced of Him. The conviction that brought you to Jesus. A peace you didn't manufacture. Words that came when you needed them. A courage that surprised you. Whatever it has been, that was Him, and it is not small. When you pay attention to what He has already done, you become someone who notices what He does next, and someone ready to receive more. And you are freed from expectations you were never meant to carry: that your story has to look like someone else's, and that if it doesn't, something must be wrong with God, or with you. People have walked away from faith over expectations like that. It never had to go that way.

So here is what I want you to do. Stop measuring your story against anyone else's. Then ask yourself two questions, and answer them out loud if you can. Where has He already been at work in you, quietly, that you were too busy comparing to notice? And where is He asking you to speak about Jesus, to a friend, a

family member, a neighbour, and are you trying to do it in your own strength? If you can answer the first, that's Him. If you can answer the second, that's exactly where you need Him.

The King does not ration His Spirit out to test whether you caught the exact instant of the handoff. He gives Him fully, so His reign can move through you now, in ways that are usually far quieter than a single dramatic moment, and sometimes far bolder than you expected. Whether He came to you all at once or unfolded in you over time, the question is the same for all of us. Is His reign advancing in you, right now? My encouragement to you is this: notice the Spirit working in you moment by moment, rather than missing Him while you search for one big moment. Release yourself from the pressure of comparing, and you'll find something better waiting on the other side of it. He has been right here, working in you, every single day.

Staying attentive to that daily presence is what keeps you open, not just to what He has already done, but to whatever He wants to do next. Everything the Spirit does, He does for your good, by the will of Christ. So it was never really about locating a moment in your past. Whether you can point to one defining instant or you are living inside a string of quieter ones, you are positioned, right now, for whatever God has next for you, including the power to carry His name where you've been sent.

Group Discussion Questions

- 1 Why are we so quick to measure our experience of the Spirit against other people's, and what does that comparison do to us?
- 2 Acts 10 and Acts 8 look different from each other. What stands out to you in each, and what do both readings agree on?

- 3 Jesus told His followers to wait for power to be His witnesses (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:8). What changes about how we share Jesus when we recognize the power is His and not ours?

Self-Reflection Questions

- 1 Where have I experienced the Spirit at work in me, through conviction, peace, courage, or words given when I needed them, that I overlooked because it did not look the way I expected?
- 2 Have I been measuring my walk with God against someone else's story, and what has that cost me?
- 3 Where is God asking me to speak about Jesus, and am I trying to do it in my own strength?

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