

**Ghost Stories**  
**Pt. 1 - Digger**  
**Author: Steve Ely**

I. Introduction

Before we jump in I need to lay out a couple of foundational statements. As we examine "Ghost Stories" this month. I need to tell you . . .

1. The stories we will read often seem so different from our experiences today. I would submit that is the case simply because so often we don't involve the Holy Spirit. We want the results of the accounts we read but without the power of the Holy Spirit involved in our situation. The early believer was absolutely aware and dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit to make it in daily life so they involved Him.

2. The supernatural was natural to them! However, we are so unaccustomed, uncomfortable and have so little dependence on Him that the supernatural now seems odd, weird or even scary. Infrequency has produced fear. That is our fault not God's. We don't expect it or participate in it!

So, before we go any further, I want you to understand that we need to become desperate and totally dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives rather than just for good church services! (SLIDES 2&3) We have become scared of Him when the truth is in this day and age we should be more scared without Him. Why are we willing accept healing from God, but won't accept help?

So, now back to the account we talked about at the campfire.

I remember hearing this account when I was young and being scared of the Holy Spirit. Especially because the version I heard and read says in Verse 11. . . Great fear gripped the entire church and everyone else who heard what had happened.

I understood the fear part. I was gripped with fear when I heard it. I will come back to that verse, but I want to dive in a little and see that there are some truths we need to learn and that the fear I read about is better translated respect or reverence.

The first thing I want us to notice is that regardless of whether you adhere to the idea that Ananias and his wife were believers or outsiders just trying to impress those in the body the fact is, they were involved in deception. In fact, listen to how Scripture says this went down . . . But then a man named Ananias, with the consent of his wife Sapphira, sold some property. With his wife's full knowledge, he kept back some of the money for himself and brought the remainder and laid it at the apostles' feet. Peter asked, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart so that you should lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back some of the money you got

for the land? As long as it remained unsold, wasn't it your own? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? So how could you have thought of doing what you did? You didn't lie only to men, but also to God!"

They intentionally attempted to deceive men and worse God. Peter makes it clear the money wasn't the issue. The truth was.

As a side note I think it is very ironic and interesting that Anaias means - "Jehovah has been gracious." This makes the intentional deception even worse to me. He experiences the gracious nature of God; he is blessed and then sins against God and the meaning of his own name and because he and his wife were greedy.

So, the issue here is deception. Has anyone else seen what I think is a hilarious commercial of the woman driving in the carpool and one of her coworkers gets the text that the meeting they are going to has started. Her response is text back "Dear Sharon . . . don't mess with my discount!?" It repeats with her husband taking her to hospital about to have a baby in the car. Through her pain she says it again, "Don't mess with my discount." Then, her young son implores her to drive faster because he needs to use the bathroom and she says she is holding it too so she won't lose her discount. I laugh at that every time because I am convinced that too many of us are operating the same way, but our statement seems to have become . . . **Don't mess with my deception.**

How many of us are involved in deception and don't want anyone to mess with it? We know it. We have embraced it. We are even intentional about it. We know the Word says in black and white what we are doing or believing is wrong, but we have listened to other people, our society, movie stars, Bible "scholars" and we take their word over God's simply because we don't want anyone messing with our deception. So, we accept language, behavior, habits, prejudices, ways of thinking and lifestyles and we aren't just deceived but worse we are intentionally, and in many cases, delightfully deceived.

I want to repeat a statement I have made to you in the past for my own peace of mind and hopefully that you will embrace this truth!

**The Holy Ghost will never lead, guide or speak to you in contradiction to the written Word. Anything you hear that contradicts the Word is deception.**

I don't care how much you feel it. I don't care what prophet affirms it. I don't care how many close advisors or people with wisdom assure you. I don't care how many goosebumps exploded on the back of your neck. You are deceived. If you can find it in His Word, then you don't need to find it in prayer or prophecy! So, the question is not if what you heard is right (the answer to that question is in

black and white). The question is are you willing to let the Word mess with your deception or not?

The other thing I want to draw your attention to is that when we read this account about Ananias and Sapphira we tend to focus on the killing in the account. That is what makes it "scary."

**However, the revelation about the Holy Ghost is not killing . . . it's uncovering!** Don't make a doctrine out of one account. You read no other account of Holy Spirit killing someone for lying. However, you certainly read accounts of the Holy Spirit revealing, uncovering, and convicting. The revelation of the Holy Spirit as a digger should cause us to strive for honesty before God and man. Because if He dug into their lives, then we can rest assured that He is digging in our lives. If He is unwilling to let their deception remain buried, then He is just as committed to unearthing ours so that we will repent! The Holy Ghost is still in the convicting business! Are we still in the repenting business? Why does he uncover . . . the last verse reveals why.

Text: Acts 5:11

By this time the whole church and, in fact, everyone who heard of these things had a healthy respect for God. They knew God was not to be trifled with.

Maybe the real lesson is that we need to come back as a church, as believers, and maybe if the unbeliever came back to the place of verse 11 and had a healthy respect for God, we would all live differently. Believers would look more like Christ. Unbelievers would be more careful. And maybe as a church we would be able to go one verse further. We never seem to connect verse 12. We stop reading after the scary part. I want us to read the next verse today because the truth is verse 12 is most likely a direct result of verse 11 . . . verse 12 says . . .

"Now many signs and wonders were being performed by the apostles among the people, who were gathered together in Solomon's Colonnade."

Perhaps if we came back to 11 we would also come back to 12. Signs and wonders performed! Miracles birthed out of manners. Power exploding out of proper perspective. Out of proper reverence let's let Him dig today!

Where are you intentionally deceived? Where are you comfortable in deception? Let Him dig out the deception and He might just dig out sickness, fear, anger, depression, attitudes and everything else that needs to be removed as well. If we allow Him to deal with our deception, then I believe He will kill, slay, defeat, those things that have held us in bondage!

**Ghost Stories**  
**Pt. 2 - It?**  
**Author: Steve Ely**

I. Introduction

Can you imagine the fear, anxiety, concerns the disciples must have had and felt when this man they had embraced as The Son of God and had now put all their hopes, dreams and futures in His hands and now He is telling them He is about to leave. They would probably battle feelings of despair, anxiety and maybe even feel abandoned. But the good news is that Jesus knew that upon His departure that these men (and we) would need help. So, this is where we start today. I want to read you the text, but I want you to pay careful attention to this familiar passage of Scripture and the words used.

Text: John 16:5-15 (TLB)

“But now I am going away to the one who sent me, and not one of you is asking where I am going. Instead, you grieve because of what I’ve told you. But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don’t, the Advocate (paraclete - counsel for defense, an intercessor, a helper/comforter) won’t come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God’s righteousness, and of the coming judgment. The world’s sin is that it refuses to believe in me. Righteousness is available because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more. Judgment will come because the ruler of this world has already been judged. “There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can’t bear it now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me. All that belongs to the Father is mine; this is why I said, ‘The Spirit will tell you whatever he receives from me.’

So, I want to point out something really important from this passage as the simple backdrop to teach you some key things about the Holy Spirit.

Notice in John that Jesus didn’t abandon His disciples or us! He, in fact, makes it clear that it is for our own good that He departs because this allows Him to send Him . . . that was an important statement.

**If you mislabel something, then you will misunderstand something.**

For example, if you mislabel a cup as a plate you won’t understand its purpose. Can you imagine how crazy it would be if you thought a cup was a plate? At fellowship meals you would be the person putting food in your cup based on a label that caused you to misunderstand.

This happens with the Holy Spirit. It is essential that you don't mislabel the Holy Spirit as an It! Jesus says that He will send Him! Jesus is making it clear that He is sending us the person of the Holy Spirit.

### **The Holy Spirit is not an it! The Holy Spirit is Him!**

I have heard the Holy Spirit mislabeled as a force. No . . . The Holy Spirit is a Him. If you don't embrace this, then you will not realize that it is possible to develop a relationship with Him just like you do with our Father and our Savior. If you label Him as an it or as a force, then you will view the Holy Spirit as a thing out there that isn't personal or approachable.

Now before I explain why this truth is so important let me stop and say this because I know my crowd. Some of you are nervous because you would say I am not Pentecostal, so this doesn't really apply to me. Wait just a minute this is important to you because even if you aren't Pentecostal, you have the Holy Spirit in you! I will explain that more next week. (Next week we will talk about 3 baptisms in Scripture that some people have made scary and confusing.) However, let me prove Scripturally that the Holy Spirit is working in and through you.

1 Corinthians 12:3 (TLB)

But now you are meeting people who claim to speak messages from the Spirit of God. How can you know whether they are really inspired by God or whether they are fakes? Here is the test: no one speaking by the power of the Spirit of God can curse Jesus, and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," and really mean it, unless the Holy Spirit is helping him.

So, we are told by Paul that you can't even become a believer unless the Holy Spirit helps you believe. He is involved in the process. Again, I will explain more next week, but I just want to mention that so you don't dismiss the Holy Spirit out of your life. You need to know the Holy Spirit as a Him even if you would say you have never had a Pentecostal experience.

Why is that important? I already answered it if you mislabel, then you misunderstand.

What is the difference between a person and an it . . . person and a car?

A person is different because a person has a soul. What is a soul? Soul is made up of three things . . . mind, will, emotions. Another way to say this is that a person has thoughts, desires, and feelings.

Real quick let me mention that the Holy Spirit has these three things.

1. Mind - Romans 8:27 - Paul addresses the mind of the Spirit. I Corinthians 2:10-11 The Spirit knows the mind of God. Think about the importance of this . . . You have someone in you that helps you know God's thoughts! In fact, Jesus said the Holy Spirit would help lead you in all truth!

2. Will - 1 Corinthians 12:11 - "But the one and the same spirit works all these things dividing to each one as

He wills.

All you have to do is read Acts and you see the Holy Spirit exerting His will. He forbade the disciples to go to Asia (Acts 16). He exerted His will to get disciples to go to Gentiles with the Gospel. The great news is that with the Holy Spirit in you He helps you know the will of God. We know His general will through the Word. We know His specific will through hearing the Holy Spirit. The two must line up and agree. So, for example the Word tells us how to work. The Holy Spirit tells us where to work. The Word tells us how to give. The Holy Spirit tells us what to give (amount). The Word tells us how to marry. The Holy Spirit tells us who to marry. He has a will. So, His job is to help us know the specific will of God!

3. Feelings

The Holy Spirit has feelings. I heard someone accurately say that the Fruits of the Spirit are feelings. Think about that joy, love, peace, kindness, gentleness. Feelings. The Holy Spirit feels. In fact, we are told that the Holy Spirit can feel in Scripture. In this case it is a negative feeling. We are told in Ephesians 4 that we can grieve the Holy Spirit and not only that we are told what actions accomplish make the Holy Spirit grieve.

Ephesians 4:23-32

Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy. So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. And “don’t sin by letting anger control you.” Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil. If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need. Don’t use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. And do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

So, we are told not to grieve the Holy Spirit. Hurt His feelings. Then we are told what we do which causes that . . . lying, stealing, lack of generosity, foul or abusive language, bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, slander, all types of evil behavior. All of those things grieve the Holy Spirit.

The list is important, but the result of the list is even more important . . . grief. What does that mean? It means that our actions cause distance between us and the Spirit. We need to refrain from these things because it diminishes fellowship with the Spirit.

This is important because I have been taught about the Pentecostal experience all my life, but I have heard very little about the daily fellowship of the Holy Spirit. I have heard about using the gifts but little about protecting the daily relationships that produces those gifts! Our actions can produce distance between us and the daily fellowship of the Holy Spirit. That is why you feel like you feel when you do things that grieve the Holy Spirit. You have created distance between you and Him.

### **Don't hurt the Holy Spirit's feelings!**

This list is written for believers. We have all heard preaching about these things and how they impact salvation but what I want you to hear today is these things break down fellowship with the Holy Spirit and if you believe what I said last week when I said we are in desperate need of the Holy Spirit in our daily life, then we can't afford to hurt the Holy Spirit's feelings! Why? Because we can't afford to have distance between us and Him!

What is the importance of this message today? First, I want you to get the label right so that you can embrace the person of the Holy Spirit. Why would you not tap into the power of knowing God's thoughts, God's will, and God's feelings? You can only do that through the Holy Spirit! Begin to develop an ongoing and personal relationship with the Holy Spirit! Second, it is absolutely essential to guard the daily fellowship with the Holy Spirit? How? By making sure your actions aren't hurting His feelings. Could it be that the distance you have been feeling is because you have grieved the Holy Spirit? You have taken actions or used words that have distanced Him from you. We can and must close that gap this morning.

**Ghost Stories**  
**Pt. 3 - Three's Company**  
**Author: Steve Ely**

I. Introduction

Seeing someone baptized and water was not a new concept. In fact, all over Israel there are rock basins constructed called Mikvehs or ritual baths where Jews would prepare themselves to go to the temple. What was different in this account is what took place at the end of the baptism. BY THE WAY BAPTISM SIMPLY MEANS TO BE FULLY IMMERSED. The writer could only use the descriptive words "like a dove" to try to communicate what took place when the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus. However, what isn't mentioned is the pattern of three that is being carried out and continued here. Let me see if I can explain.

If you haven't figured it out yet God operates in order. Creation begins this revelation. God did everything in order. For instance, He creates a sky before He creates a bird to fly in the sky. He creates water before He creates fish to swim in the water. But He not only operates in order He operates in patterns. I don't have time to dig into this very much, but the entire worship system described in Leviticus is a pattern of worship and all the prescribed ways to carry it out. I will show you one example in a second but let me first stop and make a statement. Patterns are important. Patterns must be completed in order for the desired end result to be accomplished. For instance, ask anyone here who has either played or coached football and they will tell you that a wide receiver must run the right pattern in order for the pass play to work. Otherwise, the QB will throw to a location, but the receiver will not be where he was supposed to be. Or take sewing as an example. From my home economics experience, I can tell you that if you don't follow the pattern, you may be able to wear the shirt you put together but the look, function, and comfort of the shirt will probably be compromised because you failed to complete the pattern. The same is true in construction. I don't want to be in a building where the pattern called for concrete and steel foundation and the builder decided a clay and aluminum option would be suitable. Patterns matter.

So, there is a pattern of three carried throughout Scripture. One of the examples of this is found in the early prescribed pattern of worship. Moses is instructed to build a mobile place of worship. He constructs it according to pattern and it has an outer court and an inner court. Then there is the Holy Place and Holy of Holies where the presence of God literally dwelt. The goal was to get to Holy of Holies into the presence of God. That is why we still worship today. The goal is the same . . . to get into His presence. So, watch for the three . . . As you enter you first go to an altar of sacrifice. Then you go to a laver of water. Then prior to entering Holy of Holies you had to be anointed with a flask of oil. If you stop at the altar and the laver but skip the oil and enter the holy place, do you remember what the result of the uncompleted pattern was . . . death? Just remember that for a second and I will come back to it.

When Jesus arrives on the scene, He completes the law so that we don't have to go through a human priest and so that through Him we have access to the Holy of Holies. However, I want you to notice that the pattern that existed in the Old Testament still exists in the New Testament and for us to experience everything God has for us we need to complete the pattern.

So, let's think about the Old Testament pattern for just a second. What you have is altar, laver, oil. Another way of saying this is blood, water, spirit (oil is symbolic of spirit). Three steps to access all of His presence. All three steps were important.

So, let's fast forward and see the same pattern of three in the NT.

Text: 1 John 5:7-8 (NKJV)

For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.

So, again we are looking for the pattern. It is repeated here. Simply put the pattern that is laid out for us is salvation, water baptism, and spirit baptism. Three's company! Three baptisms.

Let me show you each clearly in Scripture so we will be encouraged to complete the pattern.

### **1. The Holy Spirit baptizes us in Jesus.**

I read to you out of 1 Corinthians 12:3 last week which told us the Holy Spirit is the One who makes it possible for us to come to Christ. He works on us and brings us to the conclusion we need a savior. Now Paul makes the Spirit's involvement even more plain in

1 Corinthians 12:13a - For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body.

So, the Holy Spirit baptizes us in Jesus to form one body.

Blood! Salvation!!!

The second baptism is of course ...

### **2. Followers of Christ baptize us in water.**

As part of the great commission, we are supposed to . . .

Matthew 28:19 - Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

This is the act by which we show publicly that our old man is buried and dead. A public display of what has happened privately. It is a NT version of the OT Covenant act where parties exchanged enemies, provision, swore allegiance. Water Baptism says to the world I am His and He is mine. We are one.

Water!!

But remember three's company. A pattern that isn't completed isn't complete and doesn't achieve the intended outcome of the designer.

### **3. Jesus baptizes us in/with the Holy Spirit.**

Again, if you mislabel you misunderstand. For years I have heard about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit baptizing in Jesus (salvation). But there is a third baptism which is baptism in/with the Holy Spirit. This distinction is seen on multiple occasions.

John the Baptist says in Matthew 3:11 - I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

He repeats this same thing in Mark 1:8.

Jesus tells us this in Luke 24:49 -

I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.

John 16:7 - Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.

The first baptism (blood) gives us access to heaven.

The second baptism (water) gives us a platform of witness.

The third baptism (oil) gives us power to live and witness here!

The first account I alluded to around the campfire shows that Jesus carried out the pattern. He was salvation in the flesh. He was water baptized. He was baptized in the Spirit. If Jesus thought the pattern was important, should we?

We see Peter preach this pattern on the Day of Pentecost. Acts 2:37-29.

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent (salvation) and be baptized (water baptism), every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

If that wasn't enough let me ask you this . . .

How important was the pattern to the NT Church? 25 years after the day of Pentecost, in Acts 19:1-6, Paul is still preaching the same pattern ...

Now, it happened that while Apollos was away in Corinth, Paul made his way down through the mountains, came to Ephesus, and happened on some disciples (BELIEVERS) there. The first thing he said (must have been of extreme importance if asked first thing) was, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? Did you take God into your mind only, or did you also embrace him with your heart? Did he get inside you?" "We've never even heard of that—a Holy Spirit? God within us?" "How were you baptized, then?" asked Paul. "In John's baptism." "That explains it," said Paul. "John preached a baptism of radical life-change so that people would be ready to receive the One coming after him, who turned out to be Jesus. If you've been baptized in John's baptism, you're ready now for the real thing, for Jesus." And they were. As soon as they heard of it, they were baptized in the name of the Master Jesus. Paul put his hands on their heads and the Holy Spirit entered them. From that moment on, they were praising God in tongues and talking about God's actions. Altogether there were about twelve people there that day.

Salvation gets you access into heaven. Nothing else. You will never hear me say that you have to have all three baptisms to get into heaven. But my goal, which I think was also Jesus', was NOT just to get you to heaven. He wanted you to experience everything God has for you in this life too and for you to have the ability to share this pattern with others.

So, I encourage you to complete the pattern.

How many of us are willing to go through step one of the pattern, step two of the pattern but because we thought it was weird or strange we bypass step three and we enter His presence and we live saved but we live with no life? No power? Complete the pattern. To get everything He has for you follow the pattern!

**Ghost Stories**  
**Pt. 4 - Ghostly Gains**  
**Author: Steve Ely**

I. Introduction

I have an announcement to make. Did you know that for the last 12 years if you have attended our church you could have received a 25% discount at Walmart on any of your purchases and you could have played golf free once a month at Pebble Beach, and been treated to an all-expenses paid vacation to Hawaii every year? OK, we know those statements are not true. However, if you are a part of an organization and discovered that there were benefits afforded you that you didn't know about or failed to access it would upset you. In fact, if I discover an organization or subscription service or insurance policy has promised benefits for its members, and I haven't enjoyed those benefits I would demand them. I think this is the major issue for us as a church when it comes to the Holy Spirit. Because of confusion, misuse, abuse, what we have classified as weird we have at times failed to access or embrace the benefits of the Holy Spirit. So let's make sure we look at the membership manual and see the benefits of having the Holy Spirit in our life and maybe also address or deal with some of the confusion that causes us to miss all the benefits. However, there are some Ghostly Gains we need!

Text: Acts 1:8 (NIV)

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 (NIV)

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

Galatians 5:22-23 (TLB)

But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

So, for our discussion today I want to talk to you about the benefits of the Holy Spirit. They are clear and they are not confusion or weird. I would say in many cases they are however missing. There are some other benefits that could be listed but I want to focus on the 3 main items/groups of benefits and then make a couple of statements that I hope will help us.

### **Benefits (Ghostly Gains - Not mentioned in order of importance just in order of mention in Scripture)**

- 1. Power to witness.**
- 2. Gifts of the Spirit.**
- 3. Fruit of the Spirit.**

### **We need power to replace excuses with effective!**

I want to submit to you that we desperately need you to embrace and encounter baptism in the Holy Spirit because we need you to have power to witness. I want you to stop just a moment and think about the group that is gathered on the Day of Pentecost. They were probably all outgoing, extroverts, right? Bold? No fear? No timidity? Remember this is the same group that ran and hid during adversity at the end of Jesus' life. Even the bravest denied. On the Day of Pentecost, we hear from the extrovert . . . Peter. But I want you to notice that after the Day of Pentecost Scripture tells us in Acts 17 that these men (not man - singular - men plural) turned the world upside down. They collectively changed the world. All of them, with different personalities and demeanor were effective! It was singularly because of the power of the Spirit in their life that caused them to be effective witnesses. We need you to encounter the Holy Spirit so that our natural timidity, fear, shyness will no longer be an excuse to not witness. The Holy Spirit can operate through anyone regardless of their natural tendencies. And can I say we need EFFECTIVE witnesses today! Sometimes we have witnesses that aren't being effective. They are bold but they are ineffective (guys on corner)! Even the most outgoing person needs the power of the Holy Spirit to be effective today! Too many of us are power less because we don't have the Spirit empowering us!

### **We must make room for Gifts and Fruit!**

This is where people get nervous. So let me cover a couple of items. For many the fear of the gifts causes them to tend to only focus on the fruit. Others only focus on the gifts and forget about the fruit. I want you to hear me clearly . . . this is a both and not either or. Without gifts we are incomplete. Without fruit we are incomplete. In a second when I tell you why we need these things I think you will understand that we must have both.

There are basically two camps that you typically find in churches. All gifts or all fruit.

I think the fear/confusion comes in because we have a lot of Pentecostals running around who speak in tongues but never operate in wisdom knowledge discernment faith healing or any other gift or they operate in other gifts as well but never exhibit any fruit. Let me stop for a second and address tongues - Hear me clearly tongues is a significant benefit to say the least because we are told that the most unruly member of our body is our tongue so the Holy Spirit is flexing his muscles when the tongue is controlled. Paul understood the significance of this gift and he said that he wants us to speak in tongues. However, he also makes it clear that he does not want us to only speak in tongues. He knew that praying in tongues allows us to pray mysteries. The Spirit prays what we don't know to pray. I believe entirely that you can make the case Scripturally that it is the first evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Tongues may be the loudest and sometimes most obvious gift but that doesn't mean it's the only one. My contention to those who have grown up in Pentecostal settings is that too many are only tapping into one benefit. We speak in tongues, but we never operate in other gifts and we often fail to operate in kindness or live in joy. Let's not become so consumed by one gift that we forget/ignore the others and certainly not become guilty of forgetting that all the gifts are usually hard to embrace if we are not also exhibiting fruit!

Then the second group is all about fruit. Largely I think this group exists because they are afraid of or can't wrap their mind around gifts - and a lot of the time that stems from a fear of tongues. This fear has caused you to dismiss other gifts! I challenge you that if you only focus on that one thing and dismiss everything else then you risk missing out on benefits that you need. The fruit is necessary and important, however, without the gifts we are missing a vital component needed in the body and in life.

If we are part of an organization and fail to access all the benefits, we are missing the full benefit of being a part. If we don't allow the Holy Spirit to help us experience power, gifts and fruit then we are not getting all the benefits afforded to us.

Why is that an issue? Why can't I just live saved and make it to heaven? We desperately need gifts because Paul teaches us in 1 Corinthians that the gifts edify the body (edify, exhort and comfort). So, if we don't have the gifts in operation as a body we can't build, encourage or comfort one another the way we should. So, to put it simply, without the gifts of the Spirit in action as you interact with one another we become a social club gathering only for exposure. We need the fruit in place because the fruit is causes us to stand in direct contrast to our society. That is why Paul in Galatians precedes the list of fruit with a list of what the world acts like. The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. The fruit of the Holy Spirit makes us stand out in that type of environment. In fact, Jesus tells us that we are to learn to rightly judge

people by their fruit (you will know them by their fruit - false prophets) we will be known by our fruit (not gifts)!

Without spiritual gifts and their exercise there can be no authentic church life and without the fruit we have an identity crisis.

**Gifts to step in and fruit to stand out.**

So, I want us to lay aside fear. I want us to focus on all the gifts and all the fruits. I want us to move to this position - All. We want it all. We want it all. Why? What do you have to offer if not through the Holy Spirit? Can I offer you healing without Him? Joy without Him? Wisdom? No on my own I am powerless to help. So, I need Him.

Illustrate -

Cake Pop or Entire Cake

Dixie Cup or Big Gulp

My point is why settle for fruit if you can also have gifts? Why settle for gifts when you can also have fruit?

Why settle for one gift when you can have them all?

Let's refuse to settle for a cake pop when we can have the entire cake or a dixie cup when we can have the big gulp!