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BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF PEACE

EXPERIENCE A LIFE AWAKENED TO HIS SPIRIT



EXPERIENCE
A LIFE AWAKENED
TO HIS SPIRIT

BECKY THOMPSON



God So Close

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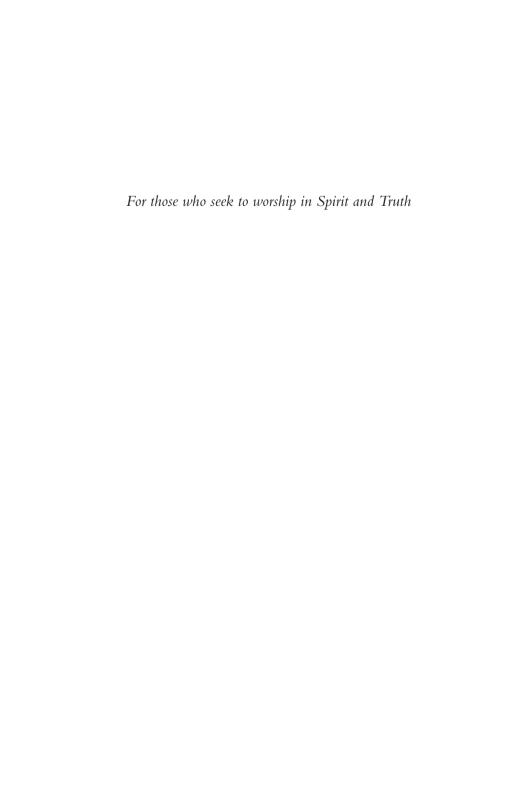
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put my laptop on the kitchen table and opened a new document. As I sat facing the rolling green space behind my house in Tennessee, I thought about all I hoped this book would do once it reached you. So I pulled out two additional chairs at my table: one for you and the other for the Lord, because I wanted to remember that this is a conversation between friends. It looks like a book, but my prayer is that it reads like a transcript of a conversation over coffee.

Returning to my own chair, I took my seat behind my computer and prayed, Lord, what do You want to say to her? What do You want to remind her of? What do You want to teach her? What do You want her to know about who You are?

I waited, listening for His voice. Becky, begin with love, God answered. Tell her it's because I love her that I made a way for us to be together. Tell her I sent My Son and My Spirit so I could be close to her just because I love her so much.

I started to cry. It has always been love, hasn't it? We try to make our lives as followers of Jesus about so many things. But the foundation of all we believe is that the Father so loved us that He bought back our eternal relationship through the blood of Jesus. The Father so loved us that He wouldn't leave us orphans, and even after Jesus came and returned to heaven, He sent His Spirit so we could be together. *Love*.

So we'll start there, just as He prompted. My prayer for you is that before you read one more word, you will feel the presence of

God's love in the room with you. I don't know what your day has been like. I don't know what you've faced or even if it's morning, afternoon, or night as you read this. But I know this with full certainty: God is with you. Not in a cliché, *Yeah*, *Becky*, *of course God is with me; He's everywhere* kind of way. The Spirit of God is with you and wants to take all the cares you've been shouldering.

It's been a lot, hasn't it? Maybe everyone knows or maybe only God does, but what you've been walking through has been heavy. You need joy. You need peace. You need a good break and just not to be responsible for all the things anymore. My friend, what I can offer you is the reminder that the only one who can carry it all, take care of it all, and sort through all the details isn't distant or distracted. He's right here. Sometimes we forget that God has all the answers and He's right here with us.

Can we focus on His closeness for a second? Can we turn our hearts and attention on what it actually means that the same God who made all things is in the room with us right now? He's not a God who was only present and real during biblical times and has since set aside His power. He didn't form the earth and then step back, brushing the dust from creation off His hands, leaving us to figure out each day on our own. He's the God who sent His Son in the flesh and sent His Spirit into our hearts so He could walk each dusty day with us, washing off the worries of the world with the fresh, living water of His presence.

Do you sense Him reminding you of this truth? Take a deep breath, and let me pray for you.

Lord, melt away all the stress my friend has been carrying. Bring healing to any deep sadness in her heart. Help her sense Your love surrounding her now. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

You were made to be with Him. You weren't made to simply

know about God but to experience a relationship with Him—a relationship in which He is just as real to you now as He was in every story you've ever read about Him. Listen, my friend: Your God hasn't stopped talking, healing, intervening, or directing. He has not stopped loving you just as fiercely as He did on the day He first thought of you and saw the life He had planned for you. No, He's been whispering to your heart, drawing you closer, being miraculously present with you moment after moment. And He wants to awaken you to what it means to be filled with His Spirit.

I have a feeling you've picked up this book because you want more than ordinary. You want to experience God, hear from God, and know Him as a friend. You want the full relationship that is available to you, with nothing missing, and nothing short of all He has to offer. My prayer is that this book becomes more than words on a page, that it becomes a door for you to discover a deeper understanding of God, others, and yourself—awakening hope inside you, stirring life where you feel discouraged, and prompting you to pursue God in His fullness.

My prayer is that as you become more aware that the same Spirit of God who filled Jesus and raised Him from the dead is living inside you, it will be impossible for you to remain satisfied with anything less than His full presence. You'll look for the Holy Spirit in your everyday situations. You'll wake up listening for His voice. And you'll boldly do exactly what He asks because the risk of following Him is worth the reward of being used by Him.

I believe this book will change you. Not because of the words I write but because I believe God wants to meet you in the pages ahead. I believe He will invite you to shift your perception

of what is natural and what is supernatural. And I believe you will be prompted to shift your expectation of what you and God can accomplish together through His miraculous intervention in your everyday life.

Your Invitation to a Deeper Relationship with God

Make no mistake, the Enemy of our hearts is terrified of what we might discover or be reminded of here. But the Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit, is drawing us, as daughters of God, back into an understanding of Him in His fullness. He's removing doubt and confusion. He doesn't want to be crowded into a corner, welcome only in certain situations or during special church services.

The Holy Spirit wants us to know Him so He can make Jesus real to us. This is why He came. He wants *you* to know Him so Jesus can be real to *you*. And even now, He's preparing our hearts for what will come next.

I'll admit that I am still a student of His presence. I hold a degree in biblical studies, and I have been a friend of the Spirit for nearly thirty years. Yet daily He reveals a new understanding of who He is and who I am. That's because no matter how long we've known Him, there is more of Him for us to discover. There's a deeper relationship with God available both to you and to me.

So I invite you to join me. Let's sit and ask the Spirit to meet with us and teach us. Do you feel that stirring of expectation? Do you feel that heartbeat of hope? Let's talk about what it means to be awakened by the Spirit of God. Let's experience God So Close.

Let's Pray

Father God,

We start with love and gratitude. Thank You for loving us so much that You made a way for us to be together. Thank You for the gift of Your Son and the gift of Your Spirit. We want to know You, to be led by You, and to understand what it means to be full of Your presence. We believe You are exactly who You say You are and You will do everything You say You will do. Remove all confusion in our hearts and minds. Speak to us clearly. Our only aim is to know You more so we can love You and others more fully. Awaken our hearts to Your Spirit. Lead us in love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 1

THE INVITATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

God Wants you to Know Him

was ten years old the first time I encountered the Spirit of God. Most of my friends were taking vacations to Disneyland or to the beach that summer, but my parents drove our family across the country because of what they'd heard was taking place in some church services on the East Coast. The reports were that God had come, and people's lives were being changed. My parents wanted our family to experience whatever that meant for us. So we packed up the minivan my momma earned selling Tupperware and drove for two days from Oklahoma City to Pensacola. Florida.

We were close to the beach, but we wouldn't see it that trip. We had come for one thing: we wanted to be in the church building where God had come in a unique way. We prayed the reports we'd heard were true.

When we arrived at the church, a line had formed outside well before the evening service had begun. People had camped out for hours, hoping to get into the sanctuary that night. Many had come farther than we had and were willing to do whatever it took to secure a seat inside. They, too, had heard the rumors and wanted to see for themselves what exactly was happening there.

As the doors opened and the line began to move forward, a living anticipation awoke within me. I sensed that something significant was about to happen. To this day, as I write about it, I remember the expectation I felt about what would take place that night.

We walked up the steps and through the tall doors of the church surrounded by hundreds of people, eager to find a seat. Ushers directed us toward an overflow section, but at the last moment we were told we could go into the main auditorium. When I close my eyes today, I can still see the thick jewel-toned carpet and the glowing sanctuary lights.

My family found a seat on the right side of the room. Worship music was playing and people were bustling. There was so much going on around me, but I sensed something else as well. I was still so young. I had been a Christian since I was five, but this was brand-new. No one had told me what I was supposed to experience, feel, think, or see. Yes, my parents had taught me well about who God was in Scripture. I knew all the stories, but I had never felt like this before. I wasn't just sensing the excitement of the people. In that moment, I was also aware of something supernatural in the unseen world around me. I truly believed that at any moment God Himself would walk into the room and I would see Him with my very own eyes.

What happened next marked my life. I couldn't tell you which songs were sung or the details of what the man at the podium spoke about that night. But I can tell you that when they extended an invitation for people to come to the front for prayer, I found my little feet walking down the aisle, with my daddy following behind me. In my heart I knew that God was going to meet with me in a way He hadn't before.

The front was crowded. It seemed as if most of the people had left their seats and made their way to the altar. Before I could walk even halfway down the aisle, a member of the prayer team came toward me. They were meeting people as they came because they knew there wouldn't be enough room for everyone

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at the front. I can't remember much about the woman who approached me or what she prayed except that as she came close, so did God.

Suddenly, everything about the room changed. It was like I wasn't even on earth. It felt like heaven. I closed my eyes and encountered God's perfect peace. In that moment I felt fully loved. It was both a physical and spiritual experience in which I felt as if Jesus Himself were standing in front of me. In my body, I felt the Holy Spirit rest on my heart like you might feel the warmth of a heated stove or the weight of a heavy blanket draped over your shoulders. In my spirit, the peace I experienced felt thick, like sweet honey on the inside, melting away all fear and uncertainty. My own legs couldn't hold me up in the weight of God's presence, so I dropped to the floor in worship.

I was in the presence of the Holy Spirit, and absolutely nothing else mattered.

That night was the first of many encounters with the Spirit of God. Over the course of that summer and the years that followed, I continued not only to feel God's presence but also to see miracles unfold in front of my eyes, incidents that defied science and logic and can only be described as supernatural. As a child, I saw God do wonderful works that still cause me to marvel at His awesome power. These events marked me. I became unsatisfied with just hearing about God. I wanted to meet with Him again and again, and I learned He wanted to keep meeting with me too.

I also learned another foundational truth that has given my faith solid ground throughout most of my life: Who God is today is exactly who He has always been. He created us to know Him, and through the sacrifice of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit, we can be together with Him forever—beginning right now.

The Holy Spirit Changes Everything

Today I know much more about the Holy Spirit, whom I encountered that night all those years ago. While my experience was pure, the scriptural understanding I gained over the decades that followed made what I knew of God even more secure. I learned who the Holy Spirit revealed Himself to be in the Word. I learned how He moved throughout history and the early Church. And I learned what the Spirit's role is in the life of the Believer and the Church.

But that one encounter with God taught me something else. I learned that one moment in God's presence can do more to

I learned that one moment in God's presence can do more to transform a person's life than a thousand moments simply hearing about Him.

transform a person's life than a thousand moments simply hearing about Him. I am certain that when a person meets God and discovers He isn't just out there but is a real, loving friend who comes close and speaks directly to us, we become unsatisfied with simply talking about Him. Just as you might expect if you were to walk into a room and meet Jesus, when the Spirit of God is in the room, faith rises. Hope rushes in. Joy overflows. Peace rests. Strength comes.

Determination ignites. When we meet the Spirit of the everlasting God, everything changes. Because He isn't just a feeling; He is God.

He is the same Spirit who helped create the world, who filled Jesus and raised Him from the dead, who moved through the apostles, and who worked miracles across the ages. He makes Jesus alive in us. As Believers in Jesus Christ, we have been given

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the gift of not only knowing the Holy Spirit but also being filled by Him. My hope is that as you read this book, you encounter Him for yourself.

How Well Do You Know the Holy Spirit?

So, my friend, I have to ask you a question: How well do you know the Holy Spirit? Be honest with yourself. I'm not talking about how much you know *about* Him. I'm asking, how well do you know the Holy Spirit as your friend? How clearly do you hear His voice? How real is He in your everyday life? How often do you follow His promptings? These might be new ideas you haven't previously considered, but God wants us to know Him and to reveal His power and love to the world around us. Few understand the depth of relationship He offers and the power He has given us.

The truth is, if the events that have unfolded in our lifetimes have taught us anything, it's that we must know God outside the four walls of the church. We must be able to follow the Holy Spirit as our guide and learn from Him even when we are not in the presence of a physical guide like a pastor or teacher. Long gone are the days of believing that the Holy Spirit of God only attends certain church services or speaks to or through certain people. As Believers, we are carriers of His Spirit and have been filled with His power and presence, and it's for His glory that we've been given gifts to impact the world and reveal the message of Jesus. We must know what it means for God to go with us wherever we go. We must learn to hear His voice and follow it, not just for the world out there but also for the sake of our

own relationship with the Lord and for the people He has placed in our lives for a purpose.

Our Enemy's Mission

This is why the Enemy of our hearts works so hard to prevent us from learning about the kind of encounter and relationship with God available to us. Our Enemy knows that when we have the Holy Spirit within us and allow God to move through us, the kingdom of heaven invades the earth. When we are filled with the same Spirit who moved through Jesus, we become a threat to the kingdom of darkness. We aren't just knowers of God; we are His hands and feet, His mouth and His ears, carriers of His Spirit who are made in His likeness. We are children of the King who understand the authority we have and the power we possess.

The Enemy warns, "The Holy Spirit is strange. He can't be controlled. He's only for 'certain kinds' of Christians. What will nonbelievers think if they come to your church and see things they don't understand? How can you be sure you're not allowing some bad spirit into your life?"

Just as the Enemy spoke to and tempted Jesus in the desert, even quoting Scripture at times, he also tempts us by asking if we are sure about what God has said in His Word concerning His Spirit.

Our Enemy's mission is simple and intentional. If he can separate us from the power of God, then we will not be able to understand who we are as God's children. Make no mistake: the Enemy has not taken the power away from the Church; he merely

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attempts to convince the Church that we do not possess it.

I have witnessed beautiful churches full of wonderful people who treat God as someone who only did great and miraculous things in the past, not someone who does great and miraculous things *now*. So often we live as if we will only get to know God, experience close-

Make no mistake: the Enemy has not taken the power away from the Church; he merely attempts to convince the Church that we do not possess it.

ness with Him, and see His wonders later on—when we reach heaven

Yet He offers us the opportunity to know and experience Him today while we are still alive on earth.

That's part of why Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9–10). As this prayer goes on to talk about the weighty issues of forgiveness and temptation and sin, we might overlook the line "your kingdom come . . . on earth as it is in heaven." This prayer isn't about someday in the future. This is a prayer about the present that has remained the same across the ages. Jesus prompted us to speak to the Father about His will being carried out on earth today. God wants us to know Him and make Him known in this moment.

Your Eternal Life Has Already Begun

Friend, I don't know if you've already learned this or if you just need a reminder, but Jesus didn't give His life simply so we could

spend eternity with Him after we die. The Father sent Jesus so we could become fully alive in Christ and be full of His power right now, while there is still breath in our lungs.

I wonder, why is it so easy for our Enemy to convince us that an infinite God would wait for our physical death before He gives us access to Himself? We often act as if, when we became Christians, God said to us, "Yep, I took care of that sin business for you. You're welcome. So I'll see you in approximately one hundred years. Hang on in this rough life until then, and I'll pick you up when you're done here."

That's not our Dad. Our Dad didn't leave us alone after Jesus returned to heaven. Jesus said to His friends in a story we will examine more closely in the chapters ahead: "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:16–18).

He is available.
His heart is
turned toward
us. And He is
with us through
His Holy
Spirit today.

How does Jesus come to us? He sends the Spirit of truth! Sister, our Dad isn't away on business, distracted, or preoccupied with something else more important. He is the Dad who was there when we were born, reached out His arms as we took our first steps, and whispered to our hearts daily until they were drawn back to His. There hasn't been one moment of our lives when He has been turned

away from us, and there will never be a moment going forward when He is unaware of our future. He is available. His heart is turned toward us. And He is with us through His Holy Spirit

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today. We can never forget that God has proven throughout history that His aim is for His children to be with Him. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible tells this story of God's love for us and His desire to be our Father.

I don't know what your relationship with the Holy Spirit has been like in the past. I don't know what you've been taught or who you have known Him to be leading up to this moment. But He wants to meet you as He met me and millions of others. He doesn't want you to be enraptured by just one encounter. He wants to fill you and for you to be aware of His presence continually, every day of your life—each one a reminder of God's purposeful pursuit of your heart.

Our Deepest Longing

I believe this is the deep longing of our hearts: to know God as He intended us to know Him.

Yes, there are many things we crave in life. There are many things we believe will satisfy the insatiable seeking we all expe-

rience. We tend to think that if we only had a family who didn't struggle, a bigger and more affordable house, bills that are paid, health that is secure, a good job and clear mission and sense of accomplishment, then we'd finally feel fulfilled. But, while these are all good things, they will not satisfy our ultimate long-

This is the deep longing of our hearts: to know God as He intended us to know Him.

ing for joy and peace and hope. It is the Spirit of God we've been searching for all along. It's His presence that has been missing in our lives.

As the ancient worshiper said, "My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God" (Psalm 84:2). Deep within us, we don't want to be people who just hear about God; we want to be people who believe everything He said is true. We want to know Him for ourselves. We want the living God to come, and we want to meet Him as one speaks with a friend face-to-face.

This is what He wants for us as well. God is inviting us, His daughters, to come discover His heart in a way we didn't know, or maybe had forgotten, was possible.

Perhaps it has been a while since you felt Him close. Perhaps you've never had a moment similar to what I described as a young girl. Maybe it's seemed as if the Holy Spirit has belonged to every Believer but you in a personal way. We are all on different parts of our journey, but I believe that if given the chance, you'd ask Him to come. And I believe that if you knew He was asking to meet with you, you'd accept His invitation.

Pioneering a Road of Relationship

What we are about to embark on in this book is no little journey. We are pioneering together a road of relationship with God that not everyone knows is available or chooses to accept. We are leaving behind what hasn't fueled us, what hasn't fed us, and the false boundaries where fear kept us from forging ahead with our Father, Friend, and Comforter.

But here's the thing: We cannot pioneer *and* take old roads. We cannot pioneer and go where everyone else has already gone, following the path they took to get there. The road before us

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is one outlined by Scripture, but often overlooked. So, if you choose to take this journey, we will have to cut through the overgrown places where lies are tangled with truth. We will have to cut through the confusion about who the Spirit of God is and what He makes available to us. We'll have to refocus our pursuit from *knowledge about* God to *intimacy with* Him. And we will reclaim territory from the Enemy, who wants to lure us away from a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit and distract us with empty practices and dry religion.

Pioneering by definition is not conventional. God's invitation to a full life with Him involves not conforming to this world but being transformed by the renewing of our minds through His Word and His Spirit (Romans 12:2). So let's ask Him to do just that. Let's ask the Holy Spirit to take what we thought we knew about Him and clarify it. Scripture plainly

says, "The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Let's ask the Holy Spirit to take what we thought we knew about Him and clarify it.

Let's ask the Holy Spirit to meet with us and explain to us spiritual things that foolish people cannot understand. Let's break free from believing the Enemy's lies about what God can't do. And let's go to His Word, looking at who the Holy Spirit reveals Himself to be and what our response to Him should look like. Let's bravely consider the power of a life awakened by the same Spirit who filled, led, and empowered Jesus while He walked the earth.

I believe that no matter how close God has been to you in

the past, there's a deeper, closer, and even more familiar experience available to you. No matter how much you know about Him, there's more to discover because He is infinite. There are no borders of the great expanse of God's being. And day by day, moment by moment, He is inviting you deeper into His heart

Let's Pray

Father God,

We love You. Thank You for sending into our hearts Your Holy Spirit, who reveals the truth of who Jesus is and the love You have for us. Help us feel Your presence in the room with us even now. Bring us peace, hope, joy, and whatever else we need to be confident that You love us and are with us.

We believe that You have more for us to learn and experience. We trust You as You lead us deeper into Your heart through the revelation of Your Word. Mark this time in our lives as a season when we bravely began to follow You and discover the secrets of Your heart. May we be transformed by the power and presence of Your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Let's Reflect

As we begin our journey into a deeper understanding of who the Holy Spirit is, let's take a moment to write down who we

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know Him to be today. When you complete this book, we'll revisit these same questions.

- 1. I've always thought of the Holy Spirit as . . .
- 2. When I think of the power God has given me, the first thing that comes to mind is

Circle these True/False statements with your understanding today.

True or False The Holy Spirit is a person.

True or False The Holy Spirit speaks directly to Believers in

Jesus today.

True or False The Holy Spirit fills Believers in Jesus today,

supplying supernatural power and wisdom.

True or False The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to

Believers in Jesus today.

CHAPTER 2

THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER

Who Is the Holy Spirit?

t was my third year of college, and I had just transferred to another private Christian university closer to home. Jared and I had been married for a year, and as a twenty-something married woman who had basically completed her degree in biblical studies, I felt there wasn't much left to learn. (Ha! Now, doesn't that tell you how little I actually knew!)

I was enrolled in a class called The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit, which seemed like a refresher course, and I welcomed the idea of an easy class in my junior year of college. After all, I already knew so much about the Trinity from all my other studies.

By Trinity, I mean that I understood there is one true God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (or Holy Ghost, as some denominations call Him). I'd taken classes that had explained that the three persons of the Trinity are all God, because they are called God in Scripture:

- God the Father is called "God" in 1 Corinthians 8:6: "There is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live."
- The Son, Jesus, is called "God" in Matthew 1:23: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' (which means 'God with us')."
- The Holy Spirit is called "the Lord" (meaning "God") in 2 Corinthians 3:17: "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."

I also knew that while Scripture calls each of the three persons of the Trinity "God," it also reminds us that they are one.

- Deuteronomy 6:4 says, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one."
- Jesus said in John 10:30, "I and the Father are one."
- First Timothy 2:5 says, "There is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the man Christ Jesus" (NLT).

When it came to the Holy Spirit, I was secure in what I knew as well. After all, I had met the Holy Spirit for myself when I was young, remember? I thought this class would be a breeze, and the professor might as well just give me an A and save us both the time.

On the first day of the course, I stepped into the classroom, found my seat, and listened to the professor's welcome. I picked up a syllabus as a stack of them circulated the room and skimmed over the plan for the semester. What will the professor be teaching my classmates? I wondered. I wasn't paying full attention as he began his introduction, but something he said snapped my mind right back into the room.

We were instructed to make sure that when we turned in our assignments, we capitalized the Holy Spirit's name and referred to the Holy Spirit as *He* rather than *It*. The professor wanted us to know from day one that the Holy Spirit is very much a person. He is God, and He deserves the same honor and respect as the Father and the Son.

I wish someone had taken a picture of my expression the moment I realized that after three years of Bible school, a

THE PROMISE OF THE EATHER

lifetime of growing up in the Church, and even my own personal encounters with the Holy Spirit, I had not really thought of Him as a person. I knew He was God, but back then I was still most comfortable calling the Holy Spirit an *it*.

If someone had asked me, "Who is the Holy Spirit?" I would have answered, "It's the Spirit of God." I don't think I am alone either. I mean, after all, the Greek word used for "Spirit" in the New Testament, *pneuma*, means "breath, wind, or spirit." The Holy Spirit doesn't have a body. So what leads us to believe that He is a person?

I'll answer that question with another question. Are you your body? I know it's weird. Follow me for a minute. You are a person. That is a fact. But are you your body, or do you simply possess a body? If something happened to a part of your body, would you stop being you? The answer is easily no, because we are not our bodies. We are spirits who live in bodies and have minds and emotions. As a matter of fact, when you die, your body will remain on earth, but your spirit will receive a new body in heaven. Why? Because your spirit is who you really are.

In the same way, the Holy Spirit is a person without a body. He's not an *it* or some impersonal wind or force. He is the Spirit of God. If Jesus was God *in the flesh*—100 percent God and 100 percent man—then the Holy Spirit is 100 percent God *without flesh*.

The Holy Spirit possesses all the attributes of person-hood—a mind, will, and emotions—but He doesn't have the confines of skin to keep Him in one place. Jesus and Scripture make the personhood of the Holy Spirit clear. Let's see what they say.

A Helper Who Abides with Us Forever

As Jesus and His friends gathered in an upper room to share a final meal before He went to the cross, He gave one last teaching to the disciples. These men had traveled with Jesus for three years. They had seen His works, participated in His miracles, and listened to His words. But on this night, Jesus told them He would be going to His Father, and they could not follow Him right away. Having given so much of their lives to following Him, the disciples were concerned why they couldn't come with Him. I can only imagine the human response that rose in their hearts: What does He mean? What are we supposed to do? What will happen to us when He leaves?

However, knowing that they would need support after He returned to His Father, Jesus explained who was coming to help: "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you" (John 14:16–17 NKIV).

This specific description of the Holy Spirit is important, and each part reveals the truth about who He is.

"Another Helper"

The meaning of the Greek word translated as "another" is "another of the same kind." It's not as if Jesus said, "I'm going away, but I'm sending this completely different thing to be with you." No, the translation means "another like Himself."

If there can be no disunity among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and they eternally remain perfectly one, then the Spirit

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must be like Jesus. And we know who Jesus is. The Spirit feels like Jesus. He speaks like Jesus. He comforts like Jesus. And He loves like Jesus.

"Abide with You Forever"

Jesus didn't say the Holy Spirit would come and stay with them awhile. Jesus said the Holy Spirit would come and abide with them forever. This is the same Spirit the Old Testament prophet Joel prophesied about hundreds of years earlier. Speaking on behalf of God, Joel said, "It shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh" (2:28 NKJV). While the Holy Spirit had been present on earth in specific ways before Jesus came, it was not until Jesus returned to heaven and the Father poured out the Spirit that the Spirit came to remain on earth

"You Know Him, for He Dwells with You"

Jesus made it clear to His friends that they had already met this Helper through Him. They had gotten to know the Holy Spirit through Jesus' life and ministry. As they had become familiar with Jesus, they had also become familiar with the Holy Spirit, who had dwelled with them in Jesus.

"Will Be in You"

This is my favorite part of what Jesus said about the Holy Spirit because it's so clear. Jesus said the Holy Spirit not only had been *with* them but also would be *in* them. If you think my face was astonished as I learned the Holy Spirit is a person, imagine the faces of Jesus' friends as He explained to them that the same Spirit who moved through Him would *be in them*. Can

you picture those glances darting around to one another? *Did He just say the Spirit would be in us?*

But Jesus' foretelling of the Holy Spirit is not the only time the Spirit's personhood was revealed.

The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

Throughout Scripture, we see evidence of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. For example, the Holy Spirit has a mind, will, and emotions. He also acts as a person who is not confined to a body.

The Holy Spirit Has a Mind

First Corinthians 2:10–11 teaches us that the Holy Spirit has a mind: "The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God." Just as you know your own thoughts, the Holy Spirit knows God's thoughts because He is God. It's clear that the Holy Spirit is a person who thinks.

The Holy Spirit Has a Will

Scripture also tells us the Holy Spirit can make decisions and possesses a will. First Corinthians 12:4–11 lists the Spirit's various gifts, then says, "All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines." The Holy Spirit knows best, and He acts according to what He wills, distributing each spiritual gift to Believers as He chooses.

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The Holy Spirit Has Emotions

In addition to a mind and will, the Holy Spirit also possesses emotions. For example, He can be grieved. Ephesians 4:30–32 says, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

Can I remind you of something you already know? The force of gravity doesn't have emotions. The force of wind responding to the changing temperatures of the earth cannot be grieved. Only a being who possesses feelings and emotions can be grieved or made sorrowful. This

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shouldn't shock us because, once again, the Holy Spirit is God, as are the Father and Son, who also possess emotions. Jesus wept over the loss of His friend Lazarus (John 11:35). God's anger is mentioned repeatedly throughout Scripture. The Holy Spirit is no different.

The Holy Spirit Acts as a Person

In addition to having thoughts, making decisions, and experiencing feelings, the Holy Spirit also acts as a person. For example, the Holy Spirit teaches and reminds us of truth. Jesus said, "All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, *will teach* you

all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:25–26).

The Holy Spirit also testifies, giving evidence of Jesus and the works He has done on the earth. In John 15:26, Jesus said, "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me." This is super important because everything that the Holy Spirit does reveals the truth of who Jesus is.

The Holy Spirit helps us pray. Paul reminded the Roman church, "The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself *intercedes* for us through wordless groans" (Romans 8:26).

Jesus told His friends in John 16:13 that the Holy Spirit guides and speaks: "When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he *will guide you* into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he *will speak* only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come."

The Holy Spirit Is Not Confined to a Body

The Holy Spirit is a person, just as real as Jesus. But because the Holy Spirit is not confined to a body, Jesus said something remarkable to His friends during their final meal together: "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" (John 16:7 NKJV).

How could it possibly be better for the disciples for Jesus to leave? From Jesus' conception to His resurrection, the Holy Spirit was a part of Jesus' life and ministry on the earth. Once Jesus completed His work on earth and returned to the Father in heaven, the Spirit would come and fill all Believers, just as

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He had filled Jesus. Jesus said this was how He'd continue to be with His followers "always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

The Holy Spirit wouldn't be present in only one room at a time, as Jesus was. Instead, He would fill the sons and daughters of God just as God had promised through Joel. The Holy Spirit wouldn't just be all around them; He would be *within* them! And as Believers in Jesus, this is what you and I get to experience today.

The Holy Spirit-God Within Us

I feel like that was a lot to take in, so let's recap. The Father sent the gift of the Spirit for all Believers, and, like the disciples, you and I can know Him personally. Jesus is *God with us*. The Holy Spirit is *God within us*. The Holy Spirit does not have a body, but He's not an impersonal force. He has thoughts. He has feelings. He makes decisions. He teaches, speaks, comforts, and convicts.

The Holy Spirit of God makes Jesus alive in our hearts, and He wants us to have a real relationship with Him. He invites us to learn to hear His voice as He still speaks to us today. He invites us to follow His leading because He wants to be a part of our everyday lives. And He invites us to be filled with His power and share the good news of Jesus throughout the earth. He is the holy God who comes close.

But how do we interact with Him? And what does it mean to be filled by Him? We will discuss all this and more in the chapters ahead.

Let's Pray

Father God,

Some of us have heard from friends and family and pastors and books about who people say You are. And some of us haven't heard much about Your Spirit at all. But we want to know with confidence now that You've revealed Your Spirit to us and that You're telling us as a friend what we need to know about You. Help us open our Bibles and search for where Your Spirit shows up in Scripture. Help us read Your Word, listening for Your voice to show us what we didn't see or notice before. We believe the Holy Spirit has been poured out, so we ask You to reveal the person and work of the Spirit in our lives today. We pursue more than information about You. We pursue Your presence, God. We pause right here in this moment to make space for Your Spirit to do whatever He wants, trusting that He will make us like Jesus. Thank You for coming close to us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Let's Reflect

- 1. I think there is confusion in the Church surrounding the Holy Spirit because . . .
- 2. When it comes to the personhood of the Holy Spirit, I want to better understand . . .