

Holy Spirit More

Session Seven: Ministry & Evangelism - Serving & Going more?

Welcome, opening prayer and worship

(5–15 minutes)

Introduction

(5 minutes)

Bible study

(15 minutes)

Read Matthew 10:5-20

1. In vs. 7, Jesus says: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' What does this mean?
2. In this passage, Jesus is instructing his disciples how to spread the gospel. What things can we learn with regards to spreading the gospel from vs. 9-20? Which of these instructions apply to us?

Discussion time and video

(40 minutes)

Is the church meant to be more than a group of people that is successful in the use of their individual gifts and abilities? What role is the Holy Spirit meant to play in God's design of the church? All of our natural talents come from God and we're thankful for them. But if our lives and churches make perfect sense in light of human talent and strength, then something is missing: "I don't want my life to be explainable without the Holy Spirit. I want people to look at my life and know that I couldn't be doing this by my own power. I want to live in such a way that I am desperate for Him to come through" (from *Forgotten God*).

1. Consider your involvement with church life. In what ways do we tend to rely on natural talent as we strive to fulfil the church's mission? The cartoon in the video gives a powerful illustration of the church today: We get excited about the tractor, then wear ourselves out pushing it inch by inch through the field. At the end of the harvest, we've barely managed to finish the job and end up with just enough food to go around. Tragically, this is how many churches operate- they are built on the sweat and effort of a few talented (but exhausted) leaders. When we consult the owner's manual, however, we find that the tractor is actually designed to run and plough the field on its own. So we fix the tractor, plough the field in a single night, and then share the overabundance of food with everyone in need. When we discover that the church was designed to function through the power of the Holy Spirit, it changes everything.

2. Think about the tractor illustration. Do you see yourself or St. Martin's pushing and pulling the "tractor" an inch at a time? If so, in what ways?

Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-2:5. When Paul wrote his first letter to the church in Corinth, he had to address factions that were dividing the church. Groups were forming around attractive personalities (Paul, Apollos, Cephas). In order to address their preoccupation with human personalities and wisdom, Paul brought their focus back to the power of God, rather than the brilliance of men.

3. How does Paul describe human effort as compared to the power of God?
4. According to this passage, why is it so important to rely on the power of the Spirit? (See especially 2:5.)
5. Think about the way you minister to the people around you. Can you say along with Paul, "My speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:4-5)? Why, or why not?"

What's true of the church in general is also true of our lives in particular. There ought to be a real difference between a Spirit-filled person and everyone else. I'm not necessarily talking about walking around raising the dead and speaking foreign languages all the time. Remember the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5? The fruit mentioned there is not all that shocking. Many non-Christians are actually happy, peaceful people. But as Christians, we have the Source of both joy and peace *living inside of us*. So while anyone can show love at times and to certain extents, we who have the Holy Spirit ought to love the people around us to a supernatural degree in any and every circumstance.

It's been brought up in previous sessions, but perhaps we don't recognise the Spirit's power in our lives because we're not stepping out and doing anything where we desperately need God to show up. Anyone can show up to a Sunday service, sing a few songs, sit still for forty-five minutes, shake a few hands, and then drive home.

But when you start talking to the hurting people around you, digging deeper to learn how you can love and serve them, that's when you need the Holy Spirit, and that's precisely when He shows up! God works in the most desperate situations so that no one can mistake it for anything other than His power. Maybe He will grant you boldness to speak in a frightening situation. Maybe He will give you a divine compassion for the lost and destitute. Maybe He will give you the wisdom to say exactly what a person needs to hear at a crucial moment in his or her life. You won't know what God will do until you get out there and follow His leading. The question is, do you trust Him enough to follow Him into the unknown, confident that He will work powerfully in that situation? We absolutely need to step beyond our own abilities. It's much safer to stay where we're comfortable, but our lack of confidence in God's power does not bring Him any glory. You get praised for using your natural talents well. God gets praised when His power accomplishes the humanly impossible.

6. Have you ever waked away from a ministry opportunity because it would take you beyond your natural talents? In what areas would you need the Spirit to empower you in a situation like that?
7. Do you believe that the Spirit would "come through" for you in that type of situation? Why, or why not?

Throughout these seven sessions we've thought through the importance of the Holy Spirit from a number of different angles. We could always study more, but it's time to act (if you haven't already). This is by far the most difficult part. It's time to follow the Spirit's leading, even if you're not sure where He's taking you or how you'll get through it. The world desperately needs to see a united church that is absolutely submitted to and filled with the Holy Spirit.

8. What practical steps can you take right now to pursue the Spirit and live in dependence on Him?

Prayer ministry and closing prayer

(15 minutes)