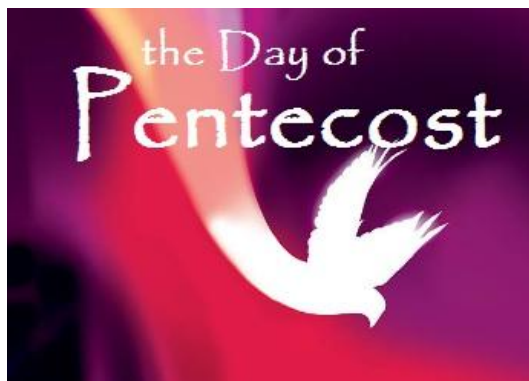


# ON THE VANGUARD

MATTHEW 11:12

Issue 4 – June 2017

## THE HOLY SPIRIT EDITION



I was ten years old when I was first introduced to the Holy Spirit. I can remember it clearly. Elder James was filling in as the children's church leader that night. He began to share stories with us youngsters about how the Holy Spirit worked in him and out of him. He spoke also of the disciples in the Book of Acts, and how they too were empowered and used according to the Holy Spirit. This concept was new to me, having spent my early days in a Baptist church. But the more he spoke about the Holy Spirit, the more I knew I

wanted him in my life too. Finally his simple teaching was done and Elder James asked if anyone would like to receive the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. My hand flew from my side and into the air like a rocket blasting off its platform. I still wasn't exactly sure what I was getting into, but I knew in my spirit that I needed this. So with the handful of others that raised our hands, we were escorted into an office to pray.

I wish I could say that my prayer language came quickly, but in truth it was more like trying to start a car with a bad starter. Sputter, sputter, sputter, then in time a vroom, Vroom, VROOM! A language I had never heard before began flowing out of my mouth. James quickly encouraged the others and myself to keep praying in the Spirit, and thirty-two years later I am still going. But what happened that night wasn't something only specific to a few kids in the children's church, but rather what God desires for us all - the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

It is common when speaking of the Holy Spirit to quote the prophecy in Joel 2:28 and how it relates to Acts 2 where the action happens, but in reality God's spirit had been with people for a while. In Exodus 31:1-5, we read of Bezalel, a craftsman, who God said to Moses was filled with the Spirit of God so that he may do his work. We read in Judges 15:14-15 that the Spirit of God came on Samson when he took the donkey jawbone and wasted a thousand men. And we read in Psalm 51 concerning David, of David's plea not to have the Spirit taken from him. So the Holy Spirit wasn't a new thing by the time Acts came around.

But it is here in Acts, though, that the Spirit begins to receive more attention. Jesus, having already been resurrected and showing himself to others for forty days now, is set to return to heaven. He gives a last minute order to his disciples to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the gift of the Father, that being the Holy Spirit, and with it the power that will come to be His witnesses (Acts 1:5-8). It is ten days later, however, before the Upper Room is filled with the Spirit and what seemed to be tongues of fire rested on those in the room. This event, known as Pentecost, took place fifty days following Passover (*Pente* in Greek referring to fifty). And it is in this event as Peter states in Acts 2 that the prophecy of Joel is found, that of the Holy Spirit being poured out on all people.

However, Joel was not the only prophet to speak of the Holy Spirit. True, Joel spoke about the Holy Spirit being poured out **ON** people, but Ezekiel prophesied of the Spirit being put **IN** people.

### THE IMPACT OF A FATHER

How impacting are you? Perform a simple search on a father's absence and you may be surprised with the statistics. A lack of a father-figure can show a rise in crime, imprisonment, drugs, pregnant teenagers, abuse and neglect, and even childhood obesity.

Who would have thought that one person missing from a person's life would carry so much weight? Yet as fathers, we have a responsibility – to impact our family. We fathers are called to be the family provider, leader, defender, and strength. But when the father is missing from his role, the whole dynamic is imbalanced and the family is injured. As a father myself, I know the challenge that comes with my title. I also know what can happen if I excuse myself from my family and leave them to fate. It is for this reason I make the determination to be an impacting father for my children, no matter what.



ON THE VANGUARD

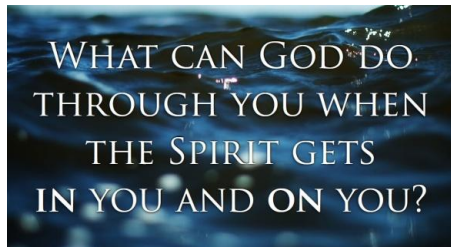
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In Ezekiel 36:26-27, the prophet spoke of a new heart that God would give His people, exchanging a heart of stone for a heart of flesh. In doing this action, God's Spirit would be put in the people. So in essence, when the Holy Spirit was given to those in the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was actually being poured out both in the people and on the people. Honestly I think it is because the Spirit came in both ways that we see the effects of the Spirit in the Book of Acts. When the Spirit fell in and on Peter, it changed who he was. Peter went from a denying fisherman to a powerhouse preacher. Saul turned Paul went from a Jesus basher prior to his conversion, to a follower of the Messiah, to a witnessing world traveler. Philip prayed that others would receive the Holy Spirit, Peter and John saw healings as a result of the Spirit, and as a result of what happened on the Day of Pentecost, witnesses were made throughout Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth.

So where does that leave us? I first point you to John 20:22, where Jesus appears to His disciples. It is here that Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Jesus blew on these men and commanded them to receive, *Lambano* in the Greek. This word translates as take with the hand and lay hold of. Prior to the Day of Pentecost Jesus had already blown on His disciples and urged them to grab hold of what was coming. This same command is for us, to accept His breathing on us and grab a hold of the Holy Spirit He is pouring out. Bathe in the Spirit, breathe in the Spirit, let it get in you and on you. And then secondly, empowered by His Spirit, allow your own personal Book of Acts to be written. The world is ripe for Him to use you to change it. What can God want to do in you and on you as a result of His Spirit?



Gifts! Whether it is the expectancy of receiving a gift, the joy of giving a gift, or the excitement of tearing into a gift, no one can deny that special feeling that comes over them when a gift is involved. But believe it or not, God feels those same feelings. Would He not have been full of expectancy when He waited until the perfect time to bring Jesus into the world? And was He not full of joy when Christ was finally here, knowing that His gift would repair the broken relationship that sin had created? And is He not full of excitement and celebrating with the angels when one more person is born into the Kingdom of Heaven. God is all about the gift-giving process. And to top it all off, He continues to give gifts.

Working alongside the Holy Spirit, we read of the gifts given to those in Christ via God from the Holy Spirit. (Talk about teamwork). But what are these gifts? Most people will advise that there are nine gifts total, and they can be found in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, where we read of the gift of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment of spirits, and both the speaking

of and interpretation of tongues. But is this a complete list? Similar listings are found in Ephesians 4:11-13 and Romans 12:3-8 also, but seem to be expanded. In the Ephesians passage is added the gifts or positions of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, while the Romans passage adds a gift of service, exhortation, giving, leadership, and mercy. But with so many gifts offered, how is one supposed to use them all?

The key is to not...at least not on your own. God fashioned the Body of Christ to work as a team, just like your physical body. Your eye cannot walk and your foot cannot see where it is going. But in between the eye and the foot are other pieces that make the function of seeing where you are going possible. When the parts work in an orderly fashion, the result is purposed footing. The same is true in how the body of Christ is to work. No one person can be all the gifts at one time. That would be confusing to the body. But as we work with the gifts that God has handed out to us, we will make a great impact. Now while it may be possible that the Holy Spirit works in a person with a few main gifts, it still would be hard to find a person who possesses all at every moment.

Recently I took a test on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, to help me in determining what my gifts may be. I was not surprised at the results, for they fit the person I feel inspired to be. Leading the way was the gift of teaching, followed by knowledge and pastoral ability. Based on these results I see where the Holy Spirit continues to give me the desire to learn and helps me to put the learning I am doing into a way that others also can learn from. This can be seen in my videos, Bible studies, and even here in the Newsletters. But the Holy Spirit has also given me the gift of Knowledge, allowing me to connect the Word to everyday life, and help others to apply it to theirs. Lastly, I have been given the gift of pastoral abilities by the Holy Spirit, as God has given me an ability to preach His Word and help in the responsibility of the spiritual welfare of others.

So what gifts have you been given by the Holy Spirit? Take a moment to take this quiz and consider your results. It may not be a surprise, but it may give clarity to the person God has made you.

<https://spiritualgifttest.com/tests/>

## \*CONTEST\*

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*It is my pleasure to welcome once more from the On The Vanguard team, my friend, Resquive.*

You are a warrior...

In your village, all the warriors get prepared for a tournament of which they must go. It is a very important tournament, in fact, for from that tournament one can only be left dead or alive. You are required to take part for there is no turning back once it has begun. It is a millennial event. Yet your people have in their possession two manuals, books of wisdom you could say, with which those who are going to fight can be guided. But which will they use?

They have first the book on how, for generations, the town has imagined the tournament. It describes the fantasy of what has to happen and what they can do to win. All the beliefs, the practices that many by legendary traditions have

followed, the actions based on assumptions and deductions of different nature, all is there for viewing. On the other hand, though, is the guide that the director of the tournament has written, explaining what he requires of the fighters, with the rules as he stated them, the challenges that the warriors can face and the right way to overcome them, with an accurate and detailed description of the event.

The warriors must choose one of the two books, and can change their choice from one to another, but they cannot combine their teachings. Since the outcome can vary, believing to do the right thing could become doing the wrong thing. You as a warrior, what book do you choose? You must take into account that after the tournament none of the warriors have returned to the village in times past. So, the villagers do not really know who has triumphed.



#### SHAVU'OT

*“Observe the festival of Shavu’ot with the first-gathered produce of the wheat harvest, and the festival of ingathering at the turn of the year.”*

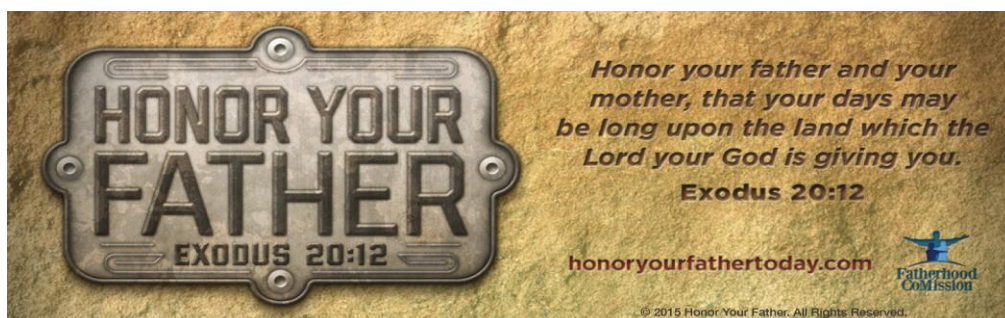
*Exodus 34:22*



*Shavu'ut, also known as the Festival of Weeks, marks the fulfillment of a fifty day period that stretches from Passover to the giving of the Law to Moses (Matan Torah). The Festival of Weeks is first named in Exodus 34:22 as the Festival of Shavu’ot, and with it a command to celebrate with the first fruits of the wheat harvest. It is actually one of three times on the Jewish calendar when men were required to go before the Lord to celebrate and pay tithes, with the other two celebrations being Pesach (Passover) and Sukkot. It was in the giving of the Law to Moses while on Mount Sinai, though, that God was making an oath with His people. In*

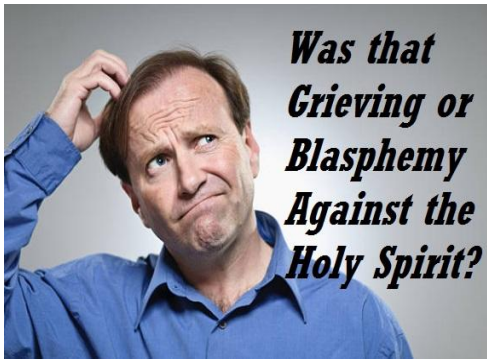
*truth, while Shavu'ot means 'weeks', it also means 'oaths'. Through the Law, God was making an oath with His people, reciting His vows you could say, for the marriage He desired with His people. He vowed eternal devotion to the people, and they pledged everlasting loyalty to Him.*

*Following this date in time and into the New Testament, we find that fifty days following the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, another gift is given, that of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. God had marked His people in making a vow with them, giving a guideline of what was expected of them if they chose to follow. It was this same date years later when a new covenant, a new vow was being made, and the Holy Spirit would be given as a Counselor, or Guide. This same vowing and gifting of the Spirit is for us, if we allow it to be. As His Law is set to guide us, so His Spirit will guide us in the ways of following the Commands originally given. It is in this thought I celebrate, for I am one who desires to keep God’s commands and many times just needs guidance in doing so.*



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On January 17, 2011, I stood next to the coffin of my father. For almost three years he had fought a battle against Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, better known as ALS, or Lou Gehrig's disease. Now, however, we were laying him to rest. As you can imagine, I was filled with grief. My dad was still young, only 62, and he still had many items on his bucket list to accomplish. But those dreams would not come about now. He had passed, and I was left to grieve his loss.

Somehow that seems to always be the case with grief, though. Grief is related to loss, or some version of death. I grieved the loss of my father in this case, but looking over my life I can recall grieving over the loss of a miscarried child, the passing of a friendship, and even the death of a marriage. This should not come as a surprise, for grieving is defined simply as the making of one full of sorrow, or of afflicting one with sadness. But just as easily as grief

can happen to us, so it also can happen to the Holy Spirit.

In Ephesians 4:30, Paul tells us to not grieve the Holy Spirit. The fact that the Holy Spirit can have emotions such as grief, points to the fact that the Holy Spirit is not only the power that raised Christ from the dead, but also a person that can be grieved. But as a person, he too is subject to the feeling of loss and death. Yet how is the Spirit grieved? Might I propose that the Holy Spirit is grieved when people, through words or actions, tear down God's family? Think on this for a minute. When one person responds to another with anger, hate, or malice, that offender is breaking the spirit of the offended. I have unfortunately done this more times than I care to admit. In a heated moment I have attacked the person through my words, knowing full well that they are made in God's image, and in so doing have broken who they are. Because that person is made in God's image, and I have spoken against God in speaking against that person, then I have caused a death of sorts, and therefore have grieved the Holy Spirit.

What then is the difference between grieving the Holy Spirit and blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? The answer may well rest in the word 'repentance'. Make no mistake, there is a difference between forgiveness and repentance. We are forgiven when our apology is accepted, be it by man or God. But repentance is the turning completely from the action of which we had to seek forgiveness. In my case, I would be wise to offer an apology to the one I have offended, as well as in asking God to forgive me. But I would be wiser to change my behavior that led me to the place where I felt the attack was the correct answer.

In Matthew 12:31 Jesus speaks that all sin can be forgiven except for blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. But to blaspheme the Holy Spirit is not a specific sin, per se, but rather the hardening of one's heart toward the Spirit's urging to end that sin. Going back to my above confession, in speaking offensively about this person, I have caused a grieving. It may be that in this the Holy Spirit convicts me of this sin and I change my ways. This is by all accounts forgiveness according to Matthew 12:31. But should the Holy Spirit convict me and I push Him aside, I am in jeopardy of blasphemy. To quote Bibleinfo.com, blasphemy is "*any sin that a person doesn't want to give up, confess, or even ask forgiveness for and additionally doesn't want to hear any more about it from the Holy Spirit.*" Let's be honest, that makes me want to evaluate myself right now, especially since blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is also titled as the unpardonable sin.

To come full circle, the words and actions that I display to a person can in fact grieve the Holy Spirit, for that person is God's prize. But this can also be true of self-sin, the sin that we perform not against others but against our self. Sin is anything we do that is against God's ways. It can be actions done in anger, but can also be an addiction like drunkenness or pornography that is against God's will. When the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin, what is the response? If it is a repentance, then all is reset and our grief is forgiven. However, if we continue to harden our heart and continue to not turn as He is convicting, then we are blaspheming.

God's desire is for us to turn our backs on sin, not turn our back on Him. Which one have you been doing more of? I know for me, I have some repenting to do while I still have the breath to do it.

<http://www.bibleinfo.com/en/questions/why-blasphemy-against-holy-spirit-unpardonable-sin>

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