

I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Recently Bill O'Reilly interviewed Whoopi Goldberg about current political issues. In the process of the interview, he said something to the effect, don't tell me how you feel, I want to know what you think. But she said she wants to express her feelings, not what she thinks and she belittled O'Reilly just a bit because he prefers thinking and facts to feelings. And she indicated that she did not want her feelings confused with the facts.

This is the world we live in. People live by their feelings without much thought. There is nothing wrong with feelings. I have them, we all do. I try not to live by my feelings. However, I don't always cover up them up. I think it is important that I not hide them. Rather, as a pastor, I need to live an authentic life before the church. There are some ministers that if you watch them in public, nothing ever happens to them, nothing goes wrong, they are always blessed, they are always positive. Life is nothing but blue skies. I live in a fish bowl and could not hid my troubles if I tried. It is important that people know that ministers have their down moments, get tired, are plagued by physical problems just like everyone else. The important thing is how do we deal with it. And sometimes I am a failure in that department too. But real people living authentic lives help each other to overcome the ills of life. It was Paul's instructions to the church, bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the Law of Christ. This is particularly true of those who are empowered by the Holy Spirit.

But if we live by our feelings, we will live in a yo yo world of ups and downs. If I lived by my feelings, I would quit the ministry every Monday morning and most of you would quit your jobs on that same Monday.

Much of contemporary Christianity lives by the same demand as Whoopi Goldberg. They live by their feelings and demand a religion that caters to those feelings. Thus, we have a lot of Holy Spirit abuse. A large number of Christians think the Holy Spirit's job is to make you jabber in an unknown language, make you pass out in a worship service or zap you with a kind of electricity that heals you of all that ails you and makes you wealthy. One prominent TV preacher recently told his audience that if they did not pray in tongues, they were not praying at all. They would have us believe that the Holy Spirit makes you whoop and holler and roll in the isles. In their view the Holy Spirit turns worship into entertainment.

What a different picture we get when we turn to Scripture. Jesus introduces the subject of the Holy Spirit in John chapters 14-16. Here Jesus calls the Holy Spirit the Helper. He

specifically refers to the Helper as the Holy Spirit in John 14: 26. The Greek is *paraklatos* and it means “one who appears in another’s behalf, mediator, intercessor, helper.” (BDAG) In I John 2: it is translated as “Advocate.” What was going on that caused Jesus to talk to his disciples about the coming of the Holy Spirit?

These chapters are commonly called the farewell address of Jesus. He is about to be crucified. In explaining this to his disciples, they were both disturbed and sorrowful. But Jesus said that it is to their advantage that he goes away. The Helper cannot be sent to them until Jesus goes away. The Holy Spirit ushers in a closer relationship to God.

Notice that the Holy Spirit is not a power but a person. Jesus says when “He” comes, not when it comes. The Holy Spirit is the third member of the Trinity. He too is very God of very God. The Bible says that we become the Temple of the Holy Spirit (1Cor. 6: 19). There is a universality to his coming. He is not limited by a body but comes to all of us in spirit. He is given to every Christian. You do not have to have a second blessing nor do you have to speak in tongues to prove that you have the Holy Spirit. If you are a child of God, if you have been redeemed, you have the Holy Spirit, or more properly, the Holy Spirit has you.

What does the Holy Spirit do? Jesus says the Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. We have a responsibility to live as witnesses even as ambassadors of Christ. But we cannot convict the world of sin. We cannot make people convert to Christ. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. Many, including Baptists have stopped trusting in the Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. So, we come up with all kind of gimmicks and schemes to get people to become Christians. It does not work. We think large numbers means success. It may be by the world’s standards but if you convince someone to walk the isle who has not been converted you have built a false church and you have convinced a lost soul that they are saved. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin, our job is to tell others about Jesus.

The Holy Spirit not only convicts sinners, he converts them. The Holy Spirit is the agent of regeneration John 3: 1-8; Titus 3: 5. The Holy Spirit brings us out of darkness and causes us to be born from above.

The Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus. To glorify Jesus is to honor him and to increase his fame in the world. The Holy Spirit does not point to himself but to Jesus. He has been called the shy member of the Trinity because he points to and glorifies, not himself, but Christ.

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit will guide us in all things. This is particularly true in our

understanding of Scripture and how to conduct ourselves in the world. In John 14: 26, Jesus said the Holy Spirit will bring to our minds the things that Jesus has said, and will teach us all things. There is power in the Word of God that is directed by the Holy Spirit and no one can begin to understand it unless they are under the illumination of the Helper. God causes us to understand. Often our insight comes in times of trouble and difficulty. In Luke 12: 12, Jesus said not to worry what to say when people put you on trial for your faith. In that hour, the Holy Spirit will give you the words to say.

In Romans 8: 16, Paul writes that the Holy Spirit bears witness to our spirit that we are the Children of God. God makes it clear that we belong to him. In Galatians, Paul says it is by the Holy Spirit that we are able to cry out, Abba, Father, the personal name a child might call his dad.

The Holy Spirit gives assurance that we belong to God. In I John 3 and 4, The Apostle tells us that the Holy Spirit gives us assurance that we are in Christ. He gives us the ability to keep the commandments of Christ and by that very act verifies that we belong to God.

In church the Holy Spirit is given to us as a community of believers. He causes us to have fellowship with each other and brings unity to his church. By his work we become dependent on each as brothers and sisters in Christ. When we are in the Spirit, we have fellowship with the Father in the Son. In a word, our lives as Christians are totally dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit.

It is by the power of the Spirit that we worship. We have a lot of latitude in how we may worship. But real worship will always point to Jesus, not to us. It is not about our needs or our wants, it is about glorifying Jesus. In worship when we take the spot light off ourselves and put onto Christ, we get a better view of ourselves. And that is often when our needs are met.

What about tongues and things like that? Well tongues in Acts simply signified that the Gospel was for all men of all races and all nations. Until then, the Jews understood that salvation for them only. But on Pentecost, the Spirit makes it clear that the Gospel is for all men everywhere by making them able to hear it in their own tongue.

The Holy Spirit is not magic nor can he be corralled by prayers like incantations. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to conform us to the image of Christ and to make us Holy. To grieve the Holy Spirit is to resist his work in our lives.

We do not live by our feelings and not even by our intellect. We live by faith in Christ. We live a life that is guided by the Holy Spirit, by the very presence of God.