

Ask pastors and other leaders to tell you what's missing in their churches today—the one or two things they have the hardest time motivating in their members—and they'll probably mention these the most often: prayer and personal evangelism.

Sure, many other things might be listed there too. Giving—although money is sometimes not as hard for us to part with as five minutes of quiet worship in the morning. Service—though there's usually somebody who can be guilted into cooking another meal or helping out in the nursery.

But there aren't enough workshops and reminder postcards in the world that can empower us over the long haul to seek God and to share our faith. The only way we'll ever get any better at this—especially the witnessing part—is for us finally to start trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit.

That's because declaring the gospel is not really about techniques or expertise, about formulas and probabilities. It's about loving people enough to really listen to what they're saying and trusting the Spirit enough for us to open up and let him do the talking.

Read Acts 1:1-8

It's altogether fine and good to seek the Spirit's power in overcoming a sinful habit, in helping to endure a tough loss, or in getting through a particularly draining ordeal. But there is no doubt that when the Scripture talks about our need for receiving the Holy Spirit's might and muscle, his main reason for supplying it is to help us tell others what God has done for us in Christ.

Now our first response to this disclosure, which for some of us may border on utter panic, reveals one of the main reasons the Spirit's power is so essential to our evangelistic efforts. Most of us are aware that when it comes to talking with authority about spiritual matters, our range of knowledge feels far too incomplete. We're a lot more comfortable staying on subjects such as the weather, the California mud slides, or the good price we got on towels last week at Wal-Mart.

So it's OK to admit it—our human fear is why we need Holy Spirit power! But even someone as naturally bold and articulate as the apostle Paul sensed deeply his dependence on the Spirit's strength. For him the problem wasn't that he feared being short on things to say but that he might say too much, that he might become so enamored with his own reasoning that he lost all sensitivity to what the Spirit needed done at that moment. Yes, even those who are spry and scholarly are just as much in need of God's power to witness as the shy and struggling.

## Truth On Demand

But no matter which side of the fence you live on, his words are available to us all. Jesus said, “Whenever they bring you before synagogues and rulers and authorities”—or airplane passengers, a next-door neighbor, or your brother-in-law—“don’t worry about how you should defend yourselves or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what must be said” (Luke 12:11-12). Even if it doesn’t sound particularly profound at the time, it will still be “the Spirit of your Father” speaking through you (Matthew 10:20) directly to a person’s need.

That’s not to say we can spend all our time analyzing NFL draft choices or reading Internet news blogs and expect just to automatically start sharing coherent, biblical truth whenever the opportunity presents itself. This promise of power is not an excuse to be a spiritual goof-off.

But for those who deliberately stay active in Bible study, keeping close to God in their minds and hearts, intentionally listening for people who are asking serious questions or exposing honest need, the Spirit’s words will indeed rise to the surface at just the right time, in just the right way, and with just the right expression. Try it and see.

## Building On Faith

Actually, though, the Spirit has far more than words alone to supply us. His desire is to fuel our whole lives until they glow and illuminate with God’s life-changing reality. The Old Testament prophets understood this. Haggai, for example, addressed the bulk of his prophecy to those who had returned to Jerusalem after many generations in exile. Though they had come back with high hopes, nothing was coming easy for them. Most notably, the house of the Lord—Solomon’s marvelous temple—still lay in ruins, having been savagely destroyed by the Babylonians years before on a terror trip through Israel’s heartland. But there was no money now to build, no time, no energy. It took everything they could muster just to try scratching a living out of deserted, neglected ground.

Haggai, however, had a strong word from God for his countrymen: “My Spirit is present among you; don’t be afraid” (Haggai 2:5).

Trying to resurrect a temple would require more energy and resources than they currently had in reserve. But that, in fact, was the whole point. As God supplied, as they eagerly obeyed, “the final glory of this house” would be “greater than the first” (2:9)—“not by strength or by might, but by My Spirit” (Zechariah 4:6). And all the

nations on earth would know it.

Truly we are weak, but he is strong. We should not be sorry for the first or ever doubt the second.

Acts 1:2 “He had given orders through the Holy Spirit to the apostles”

Jesus himself relied on the Spirit to accomplish his work. How do we practice that kind of dependence?

Acts 1:5 “You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now”

When the fire fell, everyone knew something special had happened. When do others see that is us?

Acts 1:8 “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you”

The Spirit’s power is expressly designed for witnessing. How can you begin to appropriate his courage?

The Spirit empowers and emboldens us. Those who try turning the Spirit’s blessings inward on themselves find—much to their surprise—that such gorging is like trying to drink from a fire hose. Perhaps the first sign of true spiritual maturity is when we finally understand that his power blesses us best as it passes through us to others, on its mission of bring honor to him.

Holy Spirit, where I have failed to share, I take all the blame. But as you speak through me, I will give you all the glory.