

THE DIFFERENCE THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKES
Developing Self Esteem in Yourself and Others
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Tonight the final topic in this five week series on “Developing Self Esteem, the Holy Spirit and Self Esteem.”

Several things I want to share with you by way of introduction. One is our self-esteem is very intricately linked with the effectiveness that we have as Christ’s people in this world. The Holy Spirit is deeply interested in our self-esteem. He wants to make us confident and competent people.

A second thing we can say by way of introduction is that there should be by us a distinction between psychological help and what the Holy Spirit can do. We ought not to make a sharp distinction between the two. In these last weeks as we have looked at strategies for self-esteem and emotions and guilt, a lot of what I have been saying is just good, sound, psychological principles that could be said by a non-believer as well as a believer. But we must arrive at the understanding that truth is truth no matter what arena it is found. If principles are good and valid and wholesome even though they appear to operate more in a psychological realm than we have heard them perhaps from the pulpit, nevertheless all truth is God’s truth. We confess that.

At the same time we go beyond that to say that the Holy Spirit has unique and supernatural access to our hearts. He is able to do what we sometimes are unable to do for ourselves or even what very competent counseling may not be able to do for us.

The third thing I share by way of introductory comment is that one of the reasons I wanted to speak on the Holy Spirit and self-esteem is that somehow in my own background I got a very distorted picture of the Holy Spirit and my doctrine and understanding of the Holy Spirit was a real blow to my self-esteem. In several ways this happened.

For one thing in my growing up years the Holy Spirit was called the Holy Ghost. I could somehow never identify personally with that term “ghost”. For me a ghost was something that kind of hung around cemeteries and haunted mansions and was spooky. And I had problems calling the Holy Spirit the Holy Ghost simply because of the spooky nature. Today I always say “Holy Spirit” because I have been tremendously uncomfortable with the word “Ghost” which is really a poor twentieth century translation anyway in as much as the word is “spirit”.

A second problem I had with “Holy Ghost” was that he was holy. Some of the people that were the worst people to get along with in the churches I grew up in were also holy. Their standards of whatever was holy was whatever killed fun. And whatever stood for a frown had to be holy. I had problems with therefore the “Holy” Spirit.

Third, from the age of ten on I began seeking the baptisms in the Holy Spirit and went for a period of about 6 years until I was 16 when I had not received this experience in spite of repeated Sunday night enlistments to come forward and receive the baptism in the Spirit. This was doubly difficult for me because I wanted to hold office in my youth group. One of the conditions was that you be baptized in the Holy Spirit. Therefore I wasn’t eligible for office. Another thing that concerned me was I was called to the ministry and my denomination wouldn’t let me exercise the call until I had had this experience.

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A third thing that bothered me was a lot of the other kids that I knew would have a very easy time of “getting the Holy Ghost” and go out and live like whatever and here I was trying to be good old moral Joe and the Holy Spirit wasn’t coming along with me. This really upset me with the Holy Spirit. In between times of prostrating myself and confessing everything there was to confess I would have moments of anger that the Holy Spirit was withdrawing himself from me. And why was he discriminating against me in this way and maybe he really didn’t want me after all.

I cannot tell you what a blow this was to my developing spirituality to think that the Holy Spirit really wasn’t accepting me or satisfied with me. I had a keen sense that Jesus really loved me. I had the idea that the Father wasn’t too anxious for me to get into heaven. That Jesus had sort of acted against his will in coming and he was looking for an excuse to send me to hell but Jesus was doing his best to save me. And the Holy Spirit was doing everything he could to make me feel distance from God until I proved myself to be the lowest worm and would come to him on the most extreme terms.

Then one other problem I had was I thought that in order to have an experience with the Holy Spirit one had to go into a state of ecstasy. Out of being. One for a while lost their sensibility and became unconscious so that the Holy Spirit could flow through you in an unconscious state. Then when you woke up you’d look around and say, “I finally got *It*.” Whatever *It* was. We depersonalized the Holy Spirit in those days by calling Him an *It*.

As I look back through all that, and I’m sure I had good teaching, that if I’d been listening I would have known better but somehow in my perceptions and in my experience I saw the Holy Spirit in distorted terms.

Now that I look back through the window of those years I well realize that were it not for the Holy Spirit himself I could have never worked successfully through those experiences. And that the Holy Spirit was with me and in me when I did not even recognize him. In fact, I remember the time I received the baptism in the Holy Spirit at the age of 16. People had always said to me, and from my Pentecostal rootage and background, “George, you’re a very quiet person. The Holy Spirit when he gets a hold of you is going to turn you around.” I fully expected by that to all of a sudden be doing really freaky things.

I remember the night. I was simply at an altar in Central Assembly in Springfield, Missouri praying to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit and all of a sudden of just praising God and saying to him in the best way that I knew how “Father, I love you,” suddenly there came out from me the beginning of speaking to God in language which I had never learned. My instant impression was to suppress that because it surprised me that I was letting it be released because I had had this misperception that in order to have this experience you had to be in an unconscious state. I immediately realized as I was speaking that I was fully conscious, aware of what was happening, and had control of my spirit. So my first impression was to turn it off. Then my second impression was, No, let it go.

All of a sudden as I did I realized that I had been praying this way for six years but had always been afraid to release what was happening inside for fear that I was not in an ecstatic state. When I look back on that whole experience I realize that from the earliest moments I began to

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seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit in reality I had already been filled although the experience had not been actualized because of my misperception of what the Lord was doing. But all in those years, without ever audibly saying or praying in another language, the Lord through the Holy Spirit was praying through me. There came a moment when I gave it expression. It was a great relief to begin to step into an arena where I knew the Holy Spirit accepted me. I wish I had known that all along but because of my own misperceptions I was not aware of that.

I since had to come in my life to a kind of full circle in resect with what the Holy Spirit is doing with our self-esteem. I want to present five ways in which the Holy Spirit is at work in developing our self-esteem.

First, the Holy Spirit is our confirm-er.

Paul writing in Romans 8:15-16 says “For you did not receive a spirit which makes you a slave again to fear but you received the spirit of sonship. By him we cry, Papa, Father. The spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.”

Someone has said that we can never give love until we ourselves are loved. We can not impart to others self esteem until we ourselves have had the sense of being esteemed. This is the Holy Spirit’s unique role in our life. He has come to let us know that we are accepted by God and that we are part of God’s beloved.

Who is it that really lets me know I’m a Christian? Not my tortured conscious. If I try to live 100% conformity to my conscious or the law of God there are moments even this week that my conscious has condemned me and put me on the hot seat and let me know, “No way with an attitude like that are you worthy to pastor a people like you pastor. Nor are you even worthy to be called my child.” The devil of course picks right up on that and says, “I agree with your conscious. You really aren’t fit to be God’s child.” But the Holy Spirit comes alongside and he says “You’re God’s son and I’ve put within you that confidence of Abba, Father.” The reason why I know I’m a believer is not something that just arises within me. But because there is continually this solid witness in my heart even when I have fallen short of the glory of God the Holy Spirit is the one saying, You are God’s child. I’ve learned that’s not me. That’s the Holy Spirit’s function to bear testimony to my relationship with the Father.

Psalm 42 says that in our relationship to God and the Holy Spirit, deep calls unto deep. This is a passage of scripture that has fascinated me. To me it explains the ministry of the Holy Spirit confirming us. The concept of deep calling to deep may be compared for example to forces that are invisible calling upon another force. The depths within the moon in a mysterious way call to the depths that are within the tides. Somehow everyday there is a change in the pull on the ocean currents because there is deep in the moon calling on the deep in the ocean. Every winter the birds migrate from Canada to some distant place thousands of miles away in the south because there has been a deep signal that has been implanted in them “It is time to fly south. It is time to leave the north. It is time to go to a new home.” There is an instinct of deep calling unto deep. Every year the salmon swims upstream at incredible odds to find their way to a place to spawn and bring forth a new generation. What is happening is something within the salmon – a depth is calling to the depths within him saying, “You need to do this.”

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When the Holy Spirit is at work in our life we see the depths of God calling to the depths within us and the spirit is confirming our sonship and daughtership.

The scriptures in fact have this beautiful witness that we not only have an intercessor in the heavens, we have an intercessor in the heart. Jesus is the intercessor in the heavens who intercedes for us at the right hand of God. The Spirit is he who makes intercession for us in our hearts according to the will of God. We have therefore an advocate in the heavens and an advocate in the heart. The Holy Spirit Paul says is the earnest, the down payment of our inheritance. He is at work confirming in our experience the Father's presence.

I think somehow having an experience with the Holy Spirit that confirms our relationship to God is roughly like maybe a son and a father or a daughter and a father walking down a road. Suddenly as they're walking down the road the father reaches over and picks up his son or daughter and kisses them and they go on their way. Nothing has changed in their status. Before the kiss it was father-son or father-daughter and that status was the same after the kiss. But as a result of the embrace and the kiss their experience has changed.

It's important for us to realize that our relationship with God that it's not simply a legal experience we have with God whereby we have a legal right to be called God's children. But the Spirit in bearing witness within our hearts deposits an experience that is enjoyable and confirming and exhilarating. I would never know I was God's child unless the Spirit bore that witness to my heart.

A second dimension of the Spirit in terms of giving us self-esteem is that he is our corrector.

When we think of correction we probably think of a teacher that gets out a wooden ruler and is ready to rap us on the knuckles when we get out of line. Such an impression of correction though I think is really wrong in reference to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is spoken of in Ephesians 4:30 as someone who can be grieved. It is intriguing that when Paul gives the teaching of not grieving the Holy Spirit it comes at the conclusion of long list of attitudes that he enjoins Christians not to have because this is what the pagan world has. He says, Having these wrongful kinds of attitudes and actions in our life grieves the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit stands by us to let us know in powerful emotional ways when we are stepping outside of his will or our lives, when our emotions and when our language and when our actions offends and grieves the heart of God.

Sometimes we find ourselves accepting or falling into a consistent pattern of sinfulness. We wonder will the time come when the Holy Spirit will no longer make us aware of that pattern. Isn't it tremendous to know, and if you examine your life honestly, we cannot think of a time even in attitude traits that have been repeated in my life that the Holy Spirit has finally washed his hands and said, "I'm through with you. You're not going to change at all. There will be no more conviction and you can just go your own way." I realize there is a point of no return. But the Holy Spirit on the other hand I think is far more generous than perhaps we sometimes think he is. He continues to correct us. Continues to be grieved. Continues to let us know that no matter how habitual we may be in a certain action or attitude he still is working on us because he wants to bring us into the conformity of God's Son Jesus Christ. He is the agent for conceiving Jesus' life in us. Christ has been born in us by the spirit and his work is never done until Christ is fully formed in us.

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There is therefore real difference and a contrast between counseling Christians and non-Christians. Christians have an innate sense even when they're in the midst of depression, even when they're in the midst of doing something that is totally unlike God, Christians have an innate sense of where they need to go and of what needs to happen. They have an anchor. That is the Holy Spirit bearing witness. Correcting.

A third dimension of the spirit's role in our self-esteem is that he is our counselor.

The scriptures call him a counselor and when we go to a counselor we pour out our problems and we then hope that the counselor can then have some kind of perspective or framework to help us take perspective and undergo corrective measures.

Jesus says "He will teach you all things and will remind you of everything that I have said to you." The Spirit is at work in our live counseling us. This may be through an inner direction. It may be through the counsel of the scriptures as we take them into our lives. But the Spirit is at work informing us and guiding us and picking us up when we are perplexed. It may have in so many different ways.

One of the reasons why I didn't want to go into the pastorate was because I really didn't think I could face a situation where death was involved. We'd never had a death in our family. I'd never had anyone close to me die. I dreaded the prospect as a pastor of having a funeral. When I first came to the church 12 years ago, it was a pretty young church, and we didn't have any funerals the first year. Along about the 2nd year I got a phone call from a family in the church saying that their brother in law was in the veterans hospital dying and would I call on him and pray with him. He'd been a very hard and bitter man all his life against God and they thought now that he might be soft to God and maybe I could bear a gospel witness to him.

I'm ashamed to say that I had never been around a dying person. I'd never witnessed to a dying person. Having a theological degree is no help at all. I was traumatized. I had not the foggiest idea of what I would say to this man. But because I was under obligation and it was my responsibility I went. God beautifully prepared that moment because this man speaking through the breathing apparatus on him did nothing in our time together except weep and weep. We had the joy of praying. I knew beyond the a shadow of a doubt when I left him that indeed he had given his life to Christ and it was just a matter of a day or two after that that I received a call that he had indeed gone home to be with the Lord.

I was asked to have the funeral. My instinct initially was to be totally petrified. I remember in the car driving kind of arguing with the Holy Spirit saying, "At last the time has come. I am going to have to do what I don't think I have the ability to do." A scripture came into my mind. I didn't know that I knew it and I didn't know where it was in the Bible. But all of a sudden it was there: "This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and delivered him out of all his trouble." I saw that man crying. I know the Lord heard him. And I know the Lord delivered him.

I found the verse – Psalm 34:6. That became the funeral text and God helped me through the Spirit to be aware of what I needed for that situation. I did not know how to go through that situation but the Holy Spirit as counselor knew in that moment how to bring the word of Jesus

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into my heart and make it real. I therefore have tremendous confidence in the word of Jesus when he says that “The Holy Spirit will teach us all things and will remind you of everything I said to you.”

It's the spirit's role to be our counselor. When we get into situations we don't know how to handle it's amazing how time and time again the Spirit gives us a window.

The fourth way the spirit ministers in our life to develop self esteem in us is that He is our comforter. Again, this is what the Lord calls him. The word in the Greek that's used consistently through 14 through 17 is the word *Paraclete* which is the combination of two Greek words, which is to call alongside. Literally one called alongside. Jesus says I will send you another *Paraclete*, another one called alongside.

Again in the Greek language there are two words for “another.” One is the one that means another of a different kind. The other is the one that means “another of the same kind.” Jesus, when he promises another *Paraclete* says I am going to send you another *Paraclete* just like me who will fortify you. The purpose of a comforter is not simply someone who will simply tuck you in bed at night. But it carries the idea of one called alongside to help. It means to come with bravery. One who gets inside of us and strengthens us.

As I read the scripture I encounter John on the isle of Patmos in Revelation 1. There in exile as an old man he had pondered the fate of the church and the fact that Domitian's fist was smashing through the hopes and dreams of the church. The body of Christ was mangled and battered and bloodied by the work of the enemy and persecution and yet he says in that moment “I was in the spirit on the Lord's day.” Anyone who has ever had real serious contact with the Holy Spirit knows that in the midst of our darkest moments the Holy Spirit comes into our life to lift us up to another reality, an ultimate reality, an ultimate dimension where we see not the problem but the Lord reigning. Paul says we who have been comforted then know how to comfort others because the Spirit has comforted us.

I want to talk more at length on the fifth area so I've gone rather rapidly through these four areas. The fifth area where the Spirit builds our self-esteem is he is our competency maker. He makes us competent.

Jesus promises in Acts 1:8 that you'll receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. The word for power is related to the word dynamite but it carries a totally different idea than dynamite. Dynamite is something that blows up with one great big bang. But the *dunamis* that Jesus is talking about is not something that just goes off as a kind of firecracker or explosion. But it is a new level of competency. We identified on our first night 3 problems in regard to self-esteem. Self-esteem consists of a sense of identity. I must know who I am and I must be comfortable with who I am and not try to be something other than I am or be like someone else.

A second factor of self-esteem is a sense of worth. I am important to someone. I am important to God. I am important to myself.

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A third aspect of self-esteem is competency – I can do something. I am able.

Someone has said therefore that when we look at the trinity we find corresponding resources to match the needs we have. It is from the Father that we gain our sense of identity. We are his children. It is from the Son that we gain our sense of worth. He loved us so much that he died for us. Can any of us say we're not worthy when the Son has invested so much in us? It is from the Spirit that we gain our sense of competency. He will give us power.

I look at the book of Acts and I recognize that there are differing levels of authority or power that the Lord communicated to the first disciples. There were 120 in the upper room on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came. Only one out of the 120 had the privilege of getting up before a large group and preaching. The rest of them because the persons who cared for the many new converts that were coming into the church. In the first day of the Christian era there were 3000 persons that came into the body of Christ, brand new Christians. There were 120 small group leaders. When you ask the average Christian person if 30 new Christians were placed in your responsibility today to teach the Bible to, to disciple, to teach them how to pray, to be a steward, to lead them in the communication of the Christian life, do you think you'd be able to do that? Probably most of our responses would be "Me? I'm afraid to get up in front of a group!" Yet it is this aspect that the Holy Spirit comes to make us competent. The marvelous thing about the growth of the early church was that so many people were coming into the church, the church retained the initial flavor of the core group. It wasn't the 3000 that changed the church into something that the 120 weren't. It's his purpose not to turn the church when it becomes larger into something other than it was when it was smaller. A caring close knit family. We need to competency of the Holy Spirit to give us that power.

It seems to me that the competency of the Holy Spirit effects two aspects of our existence. In the terms of neurosurgeons and psychologists and psychiatrists are using today I think the Holy Spirit becomes related to our left brain and our right brain. Many of us function well in the left brain area of our life but one of the things I'm learning about the Holy Spirit in making us competent is he is invading the right brain of our existence.

Neurosurgeons are telling us that the left brain, the left side of the brain is the analytical side of the brain. It's the side of the brain that organizes. It's the side of the brain that's intellectual. It's the side of the brain on the spiritual level that's concerned with doctrine, with God's truth.

But the right side of the brain is the emotional side of the brain. It's the non-rational side. It's the intuitive side. It's the creative side. It's the spirit led side. If you take the early church when Jesus speaks the words to them, You shall receive power when the spirit has come upon you and you operate in the left brain. You take 120 persons and compare them to 300 million people to reach the Mediterranean world and your left brain is going to say, That can't be done! What the Holy Spirit reaches into on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2, is he invades those disciples in the intuitive on the emotional side, on a level of their existence which goes beyond the rational. Which plunges deep into their existence and gives them a confident power to be able to face the challenge that is before them.

I tried to look at some elements of how it is the Holy Spirit really does make us competent. It seems to me that I can identify three ways that the Holy Spirit makes us competent. Especially as we open the right side of our brain to him.

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One thing, the Holy Spirit causes us to listen to God. God through the Holy Spirit has a personal word for each one of us in this room. A personal word for our life. I believe that. There is more than simply a word from scripture, which we take and know that there are certain things in common for all believers, and all believers will act a certain way. Beyond that there is an individual mission from the heart of God to our hearts that the Holy Spirit wants to implant within us and he is calling for us to begin to open our lives to hear what he might be saying to us.

I recall when I was 10 years of age, and going through a period of turmoil in a church. Suddenly one Sunday evening for no reason than I can especially remember I turned to my mother and said, "I know what I'm going to be when I grow up. I'm going to be a preacher." I can't tell you analytically how that thought ever got into my head. I just know that suddenly it was there. From that time on this shy little kid began walking in the light of that voice and began visualizing that God had indeed called him to a particular ministry. When I look in scripture I see that kind of phenomenon occurring again and again.

I find Abraham who God calls one night out of his tent and says to him, Look at the stars in the heavens. They're going to be as your descendants. As he begins to look as he hears that inner voice of God telling him, You are going to bring forth generations. The stars are answering back to him, "Father Abraham!" He sees in the faces of the stars the faces of his children. He hears the voice of God and he begins to walk toward what God is saying for him to do.

It was this month 1970, 12 years ago, seated in chapel at Evangel College that I suddenly heard an inner voice, "Look around. This isn't going to be your place of ministry much any longer." No one could have been more surprised than I because I had given years of my professional training to be exactly where I was. And I planned to be there the rest of my life. But I heard inwardly the Spirit saying, Look around. This isn't going to be your place of ministry much any longer. I wanted to shove the word aside. I didn't tell anybody. It seemed like such a strange word I could hardly accept it. But I knew it was a powerful word that had come to me.

Months later after I'd accepted the pastorate of the church here one of the deacons said this church had gone to prayer and fasting the last week of October of 1970 that God would direct them in their choice of a new pastor. The Holy Spirit was operating on a realm that cannot be analyzed, scientifically demonstrated. But it was on the intuitive emotional level.

There is a sense that in our prayer life and so many of us have problems with prayer because we see prayer as kind of a left brain phenomenon. We come to God with a grocery list of needs and after a minute or two we sort of run out of things to say. "God, you already know this stuff anyway. What am I telling you this for anyway? If you know everything, you know this."

When we begin to see prayer as an opportunity to still our hearts and listen to what God may be placing in our inner man, the Lord can begin to unlock some things and make us believe some things about ourselves that otherwise we would never believe because the Spirit is wanting to implant his direction and competency in us and cause us to do things which cannot be explained on the normal level.

One of the things I've been praying for and seeking in my 12 years of pastoring here is I feel that God has a key for us to unlock the community of Newport Beach which is basically an

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untouched community for the gospel. On many respects it's kind of the up and outer community. I believe deeply when we look at a person in the scripture, like in Acts 10 a Cornelius that is ready and responsive to the gospel, but Peter doesn't know how to connect with him. Peter goes up to the housetop at noon and he's in a state of prayer. The Spirit speaks to him and brings a linkage, which could never be brought about by human instrumentality.

One of the things that we can do to see the Holy Spirit move on us in ways that are beyond what we can do just through psychological self help is to open ourselves to begin to listen to what the Holy Spirit may be saying to us and begin to test that out. We will learn as we go along to discern from impressions, which may be simply scattered random thoughts and real voices of the Holy Spirit. I have put a check in terms of my own listening to the Spirit. There have been many times over the past number of weeks that at the conclusion of a service or during a service I've said, "There is someone here who has 'this' particular concern and the Spirit is saying to you today, do this about it." I have said time and time again, "Lord, so I know that this direction is continuing on course let that word always be confirmed." It has been without exception by someone coming to me after a service and there will be some persons who will come and say, "I think that was for me," and I will appreciate that and say God be with you but I don't accept that into my own heart as a confirmation. I want to look into the eyes of a person who really bears witness of the fact that they were wrestling with something very deep and God has spoken to them. You can tell by the tears in their eyes and their heart that God has shared something, which no human being could know. I want a faith, I want a dimension of spiritual reality that goes beyond what I can do that can only be explained by the fact that God himself is speaking.

We must believe as people of the Bible, people in whom the Spirit of God dwells that the Holy Spirit speaks and that we can learn to listen to that voice and obey that voice and step out into an arena of activity we would never have dared dream exists.

A second dimension of the Spirit's working in our life in making us competent is that he implants dreams and visions into our life. Peter in Acts 2 in quoting Joel 2 says in the last days I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh." I cannot live my life successfully unless I begin to ponder what dream and what vision the Spirit is placing in my life.

When the church was very small I began to see a vision from the Lord of the kind of body which would come into existence. For years I couldn't talk about it because it seemed so very foolish. But as we re on the threshold of moving into new facilities suddenly I have more confidence to declare it and to speak it. I can only say that that dream and that vision which God had through me for this church is a result of the Holy Spirit's work and I would never have had the confidence to come and be pastor of this people were it not for the Holy Spirit speaking.

I spoke at a conference this past week. I was the daytime speaker and Dr. Cho was the evening speaker. It is an experience to be teamed with the pastor of the world's largest church. This year they have gone to 250,000 members. Dr. Cho talked about how God over a period of time has given him a dream and a vision and when the church started to get into humongous numbers he said, Lord, we've arrived. And the Lord would give him another goal to shoot for. Now he finds himself having reached the goal of 250,000 members in 1982 and 10,000 persons every week are coming to faith in Christ and being incorporated into the membership of that church in Seoul, Korea. He said, "Now, I'm so pregnant with this vision, I'm now pregnant with 500,000 people that are going to be born into the kingdom through me." A vision that God gave to him because

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God works through our visions and our dreams. We need to do what the Lord said about our lives when he said look to the fields and look on the harvest. If we're all the time simply concentrating on the reality of where we're at and the problems we have and the struggles we're having with our personality we can't ever come to grips with it. But the Spirit needs to give us the dynamic, the vision, the dream. Something that drives us out of our inferiority, out of our low self-esteem, into an arena where success can only be explained in light of what God did. And not in light of what we did.

There will be far more people on the outside of our new facilities than on the inside. God I'm convinced wants us to see ourselves in ways that perhaps we have not yet begun to see ourselves. We cannot draw our own circle around the Holy Spirit and say, "Holy Spirit, you can only move within this." We need to wait upon the Spirit to give us dreams and visions.

The last thing the Holy Spirit does for us is he changes our language.

He causes us to change from the language of defeat to the language of victory. From the language of "I can't" to "I can." From the language of "God may not come through." to "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." I think one of the reasons why on the day of Pentecost the 120 speak with other tongues is that God wants to baptize that side of their existence, which needs an intuitive, emotional encounter with God. Sure enough in other languages they speak the wonderful works of God. With the language of praise their hearts are exalted. You show me a person who is joyful, vibrate, inebriated with the presence of God and I'll show you inevitable a person who is competent, able to do things for God. But when we are sad and distressed in our spirits and non confident we have difficult time fulfilling the vision God has for us. One of the real realities of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to baptize that side of our existence, which needs an emotional, encounter with God and needs to be lifted up in visionary experience.

I look at Acts 16 and I find even there in a normal sense God changing people's language. I follow Paul through his second missionary experience and it's a saga to watch. He starts off the second missionary journey by an argument. That's the worst moment in Paul and Barnabus' life when they can't get along with one another. So Paul goes his own way. He literally walks from Antioch, Syria to the north into Tarsus into the area of Galatia where he revisits the churches he founded on his first missionary journey. Then he strikes out west. He wants to go to what is now the western edge of Turkey, to Asia. But the Spirit does not allow him. He wants to go to the northern edge of Turkey, the underbelly of Russia, but the Spirit does not allow him. So he goes kind of between the two points to Troas, the ancient city of Troy. There he has a visionary experience "Come over to Macedonia and help us." Then he comes to Philippi, that first city in Macedonia.

While there he is, for preaching the gospel and setting a demon possessed girl free, thrown into prison. And to make matters worse he is beaten so that his back is cut with razor straps. I'm sure that had to be about the worst moment of his life. The trip had begun with an argument. It had begun with no visible results of success. All he knew was slammed doors and closed opportunities. Then he had a visionary experience. He followed it and wound up in prison for it.

Now what is he supposed to do? If there is any moment that I would expect in that experience to find a song of defeat of complaint, of self pity it would be in that moment. But what is he doing?

THE DIFFERENCE THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKES

Developing Self Esteem in Yourself and Others

He is at midnight singing hymns of praise unto God and the prisoners are listening. In the face of his experience which is telling him God has failed you and you're off on a wild goose chase through Asia and Macedonia, he is in spite of that changing his language and saying, "God, you never fail. You will come through. You don't make mistakes. You're all powerful, all resourceful. You have a purpose in this. You're going to have glory from this." When he's through with that no wonder God has to send an earthquake.

From then on that missionary journey totally changes. It becomes dynamic and expansive and the greatest ingathering of the kingdom the apostle ever known in his life to that moment. Why? Because in the midst of that struggle he had changed his language. Instead of focusing upon his problem. He had opened his heart to focus on the goodness and the greatness and the power of the Lord. We can choose to focus upon our weakness, upon our sorrows, upon our inabilities. Or we can bring ourselves to the Lord and focus on his plan and his future. We can turn from looking to the past and look toward the future and move with God and God will move in our hearts. The Holy Spirit can give us a level of self-esteem that we can never give ourselves. He will put things in our life that we can never put there.

Our Father, we close this series and we ask now by the power of your Spirit you will have done a work in us that sets us on a road to accomplishment in you. We thank you, Lord, for what your Spirit has shared in our lives. We ask as this congregation individually listens to you we be sensitive to that special voice dream and vision which the Spirit has for us. Rather than squelching that voice or that dream and vision, with lots of arguments and lots of it can't be done, we pray Lord to water that vision and that dream with our prayer and with our belief that it might come to pass that which you intend. We thank you that you confirm us, that you are bearing witness to us right now that we are your children and you're driving us with the dreams of God for us as you drove Father Abraham. In Jesus name we give thanks. Amen.