

The Indwelling Of The Holy Spirit

Introduction. Indwelling means, “to be permanently present in (someone’s soul or mind); possess spiritually.” Some believe that the Holy Spirit operates directly in the heart of man, while others believe that He operates through the word of God.

Skeptics say that if the Holy Spirit works through the word, then the Holy Spirit is the word. However, God, in the Old Testament, spoke unto the fathers by the prophets (Hebrews 1:1-2). God speaking through the prophets does not mean that God became a prophet. God speaks to us today through Christ, but God does not become Christ. So, why may not the Holy Spirit use the word as a means in conversion, sanctification, and edification without the Holy Spirit becoming the word?

People have a lot of ideas about what the Holy Spirit does. One person said, “When I’ve needed guidance, was facing some serious challenge and not knowing which way to turn or where to get help ... I’ve received direct insights of what I needed to do.” Another person added, “The Holy Spirit takes the mighty truths of the Word of God and opens them up to my understanding.” A final person wrote, “The Holy Spirit empowers me and gives me guidance so many times as to how I should live my daily life.” Is this how the Holy Spirit works?

I. How Does The Holy Spirit Dwell In Us?

- A. When an indwelling occurs, there must be some kind of method of operation as to how it happens. For instance:
 1. God dwells in us (1 John 4:12-13; 15-16).
 2. Christ dwells in us (Romans 8:10; Ephesians 3:17; Colossians 1:27).
- B. Who would say that the Father and Son personally and bodily indwell within?
 1. Then why contend for a personal, bodily indwelling of the Holy Spirit who is a person of the Godhead?
 2. God dwells in us by love and Christ dwells in us by faith. The Holy Spirit dwells in us in similar fashion.
- C. The mode or medium of indwelling for the Spirit is the word of God. The Holy Spirit uses the word as a means by which He accomplishes His work:
 1. Conversion (Romans 1:16-17; 1 Corinthians 4:15; James 1:18, 21; 1 Peter 1:22-25).
 2. Sanctification (John 17:17; 1 Thessalonians 4:2-3; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14).
 3. Edification (Acts 20:32; Colossians 1:10-11; 1 Peter 2:2).
- D. Misused passages regarding the functions of the Spirit.
 1. Romans 5:5 describes what is done by the Spirit and not how it is done.
 2. No where in Romans 8:26 is there a hint of the Spirit doing something on us or in us. It speaks of what the Spirit is doing in heaven, not in humans.
 3. In Ephesians 1:13-14, the “seal” of the Holy Spirit is upon us when we follow His teachings. It was an “earnest” or assurance to the Gentiles that they would be saved.
 4. Ephesians 3:16 expresses the agency of strength, but does not explain how this strength is obtained.

5. The “good thing” which was committed to Timothy was “sound words.” They were given by the Spirit that dwells in us (2 Timothy 1:13-14).

II. The Results Of Being “Filled With The Spirit”

- A. When we do the Lord’s will and are controlled by that will, the Spirit is in us and we are “filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:14-21).
- B. When we permit the fruit of the Spirit to be a part of us, the Spirit through the fruit dwells in us (Galatians 5:22-23).
- C. The Spirit is in us, but not bodily and personally.
 1. Foy E. Wallace wrote, “That the Spirit of God enlightens and converts sinners; comforts and strengthens saints; that love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, fidelity and self-control, are all the fruit of the Spirit, we learn not from inner consciousness, but from the Word of God.”
 2. He additionally said, “The modus operandi — the mode, the medium, the how — is the Word of God ... Independent of the Word we could never know ‘whether there be a Holy Spirit.’ All the knowledge of God, Christ, salvation and spiritual influence comes only from the Word of God. Apart from the inspiration of the apostles and prophets, it is impossible for spirit to communicate with spirit except through words. God and Christ never personally occupied anyone; and for the same reason the Holy Spirit does not personally occupy anyone” (*The Mission and Medium of the Holy Spirit*, pg. 7).
- D. It is sure and certain that we have the Spirit’s influence and direction in our hearts and lives on a daily basis.
 1. God provided the direction of the Spirit in the word, the good news, the gospel, as written, read, and understood by men, women, and children on a regular basis.
 2. When we take action on what is taught in the word, the influence of the Spirit’s direction accomplishes what God intended.

III. Would An Indwelling Spirit Solve Our Problems Relating To Spirituality?

- A. It is argued that if a personal indwelling of the Spirit is present, it would eliminate all the problems related to the church.
- B. We can understand better if we study the Corinthians. They had an abundance of miraculous gifts, but:
 1. The church was in a divided state (1 Corinthians 1:10-13).
 2. They were not spiritual, but carnal (1 Corinthians 3:3).
 3. They were puffed up over sin (1 Corinthians 5:2).
 4. They were taking one another to court (1 Corinthians 6:1-8).
 5. They had turned the Lord’s Supper into a feast (1 Corinthians 11:22, 34).
- C. If there was ever a time and place for the Holy Spirit to take over and turn a worldly church into a spiritual one, that was the place.
- D. What solution does Paul offer to the church?
 1. Paul said their lack of their spirituality would be corrected by faith, hope, and love, not the direct operation and presence of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 13:13).

2. The truth is that the problem in Corinth was a misunderstanding and a refusal to let the gospel, revealed by the miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit, do what God intended it to do.

IV. What Happens If The Holy Spirit Dwells In Us?

- A. It shows that the word of God is insufficient.
 1. He must be supplying something that is not supplied by the word.
 2. This contradicts the Bible (Romans 1:16; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- B. If the Holy Spirit operates directly and apart from the word in a non-miraculous way, then how does one know the Spirit is operating?
 1. There was no problem when the Spirit was working miraculously; there was tangible evidence of signs and miracles (Mark 16:20; 2 Corinthians 12:12).
 2. How do those who claim the direct operation of the Spirit establish that the Spirit is working? They have to do it by their feelings, but feelings have never been the evidence of the Spirit working (Proverbs 28:26; Jeremiah 17:9).
- C. If the Spirit operates directly and apart from the word, what does the Spirit do?
 1. The Spirit cannot lead contrary to the Bible (2 Corinthians 13:8).
 2. The Spirit cannot add anything to the Bible (Jude 3).

Conclusion. Our response to God's love, revealed in the gospel, brings about loving obedience and service. Our hope, based on God's revealed will, inspires and fires our souls with enthusiasm. This keeps our service from being legalistic and ritualistic. Warmed-over denominational teaching on the Holy Spirit will not take the place of simple, plain gospel preaching.

When the Spirit teaches through the word, we hear His teaching. When we manifest faith in this teaching, we will repent, confess Christ, and be baptized. If you have not continued in the faith, you seek forgiveness through repentance and prayer. Our faith must rest on the testimony of the scriptures. Obey those scriptures today!