

Getting to know the Holy Spirit

An Unusual Guest List

Dear Friends,

I've been looking at some of the people the Holy Spirit worked through in the Old Testament, and I have to say it is an interesting guest list!

There are prophets and kings, of course, individuals that we might already suspect. But if you keep looking you will find a farmer, a reluctant military leader, a man with extraordinary strength and a young shepherd who wasn't even invited to the family gathering where his own future was going to be announced.

Apparently. The Holy Spirit has never been particularly concerned with our ideas of an impressive resume.

Let's consider Gideon. When we meet him in Judges 6, he is threshing wheat in a winepress. What an unusual place to process grain, but Gideon has a reason. He is hiding from the Midianites, who have been devastating Israel's crops. A winepress offered him a little concealment.

And this is where Gideon, trying not to be noticed, that the angel of the Lord greets him:

"The Lord is with you, mighty warrior." **Judges 6:12**

Wouldn't you have loved seeing Gideon's face? He immediately questions the greeting, points out Israel's troubles and explains that his clan is the weakest in Manasseh and that he is the least in his family. Not exactly the response of a mighty warrior.

The Hebrew wording is interesting here. The verb Labash ordinarily means to put on a garment. The expression can be understood quite literally as the Holy Spirit of the Lord clothed himself with Gideon. The same wording appears in **Judges 6:34**, where the Spirit of the Lord is said to have "clothed" Gideon. It is a vivid image of God taking hold of an ordinary person and working through them.



I had to sit with this one for a minute. Usually, we think about being clothed with God's power, but here the picture can almost be turned inside out: an ordinary frightened man becomes someone through which God makes His presence known.

And Gideon isn't the only surprising name on the list! There is Othniel, empowered by the Spirit to lead Israel (**Judges 3:10**). Samson, whose extraordinary strength was connected to the Spirit's activity rather than simply his physical ability (**Judges 14:6**). And Saul, who encountered a company of prophets and began prophesying himself after the Spirit came upon him (**1 Samuel 10:10**).

The last account does raise an interesting point. Experiencing the Spirit's power is not the same thing as possessing mature character. Saul's later life makes that painfully clear. Scripture never invites us to confuse a remarkable spiritual experience with a remarkable spiritual life.

Then there is David. When Samual arrives at Jesse's house to anoint Israel's next king, Jesse presents seven of his sons. David isn't among them. He is outside attending sheep. Samual has to ask whether there are any sons left. Just imagine being the one nobody thought to call inside!

When David does finally arrive, God tells Samual to anoint him, and in **1 Samuel 16:13** it is recorded that from that day forward, the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David!

Notice something here, the Spirit doesn't appear to be searching for people who have already become extraordinary. His presence is often what makes their ordinary lives part of an extraordinary story.

The work itself varies tremendously. The same Spirit who empowers a judge to lead can give an artisan the skill to create, a prophet the courage to speak and a shepherd the capacity to become a king. There is no single personality type. No particular occupation, and no preferred social standing.

To me the most interesting part of the story isn't who received the Spirit in the Old Testament, but what God said would happen next. Through the prophet Joel, God announced something that must have sounded astonishing to people accustomed to seeing the Spirit come upon a particular assignment:

"I will pour out my Spirit on all people Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days." **Joel 2:28-29**

Sons and daughters, men and women, young and old, the promise was no longer described in terms of a select few. Centuries later, when the sound of a mighty wind fills a house in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, Peter stands before a bewildered crowd and tells them that what they are witnessing is the fulfillment of Joel's words (**Acts 2:16-18**)

The guest list has expanded.

I think about that when I consider how easily we associate the work of the Holy Spirit with people who stand on platforms, lead worship, preach sermons or are particularly gifted in prayer.

But I also think about the person quietly visiting someone who lives alone. The teacher who sees something in a child that no one else has noticed. The spouse whose marriage has quietly become a life of caregiving, discovering a different kind of love in circumstances neither of them expected. Or the person who feels compelled to make a phone call, offer encouragement or extend forgiveness when it would be much easier not to.

I'm not suggesting that every kind thought or generous act is automatically a prompting of the Holy Spirit. Discernment matters. But I am beginning to appreciate just how little Scripture confines His work to the places we have labeled spiritual, and I think that is what I enjoy the most about this unusual guest list.

The Holy Spirit has always been capable of doing extraordinary things through people living very ordinary lives, including ours.

Holy Spirit, help me to recognize Your presence in the life I am already living, not just the moments I have set aside to look for You. Teach me to be attentive to Your leading, available to Your purposes, and willing to see what You can do through even the most ordinary parts of my day. Amen

Be part of the conversation, if this message met you in a meaningful way, or if you have been reflecting, praying or simply sitting with these words, we invite you to reach out.

You can call the church office # (316) 942-1491 or send me an email anytime – kate.green@asburychurch.org. Your thoughts and experiences are a gift to us.

With Love,

Kate Green, the Asbury Staff, and your Asbury Church Family

