

## Be filled with the Holy Spirit – part 4

Message for Sunday, July 2, 2017  
by Bruce Fraser

**Scripture:** John 14:16, 26; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

**First Message:** from John 14:16, “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever.”

Jesus uses a wonderful word when he describes the Holy Spirit. In the original Greek of the New Testament, the word is *paraclete*. It's such a wonderful word, that no English word can fully contain its meaning. Various Bible translations use other words besides Counselor: Advocate, Comforter, Helper, Friend.

- Counselor: teaches us the proper way to go, warns us when we go astray;
- Advocate: supports us when we face attack for being a follower of Jesus. In another place, Jesus says not to worry: the Spirit will give us the words to say. More than that, the Spirit will also give us courage to be bold about our faith.
- Comforter: much more than just giving us a pat on the shoulder, the Holy Spirit gives us strength to carry on despite the difficulties we face.
- Helper: stands at our side, not as an observer, but actually working with us in our struggles.
- Friend: a companion. One person put it this way: “The Holy Spirit is not a substitute in the absence of Jesus, but rather the completion of his presence.”

What a wonderful blessing God gives to us: he gives us himself, to live with us!

**Message:** “Be filled with the Holy Spirit – part 4”

### 1) The Holy Spirit transforms us to be more like Jesus

Tony Campolo, a Christian teacher and leader tells about a time in his life that made a huge impact on him.

Some of my friends go hard on me these days because they think I call for compassion for gay and lesbian people more than I should. They say, “It's okay to be considerate toward these folks, but you seem to be running a hobbyhorse

on this issue. It seems to come up time and time again when you speak.”

They complain because they do not understand that I'm trying to make up for an incredible failure during my high school days. There was a boy in our high school named Roger. He was gay. We knew about it. We spread the word on him, and we made his life miserable. When we passed him in the hall, we would call out his name in an effeminate manner. We gestured with our hands and made him the brunt of a lot of cheap jokes. On Fridays after phys-ed class, we would go into the showers, but Roger never went in with us. He was afraid to, and for good reason. When we came out of the showers we would take our wet towels and whip them at his little naked body. We thought that was a fun thing to do.

I wasn't there the day they took Roger, dragged him into the shower room, and shoved him into the corner. Folded up in a fetal position, in the corner of that tile room, he cried as five guys urinated all over him.

That night Roger went home and he went to bed sometime around ten o'clock. They said it was about two o'clock the next morning when he got up and went down to the basement of his house and hung himself.

When they told me, I realized I wasn't a Christian. Oh, I believed all the right stuff. I was as theologically sound as any evangelical could expect to be. I knew what I was supposed to believe and I believed it intensely, but I hadn't surrendered to the Holy Spirit. I had not yet yielded myself and allowed God's Spirit to invade me and transform me into the kind of person I ought to be. If the Holy Spirit had been in me, I would have stood up for Roger. When the guys came to make fun of him, I would have put one arm around Roger's shoulders and waved the guys off with the other and said, “Leave him alone. He's my friend. Don't mess with him.” But I was afraid to be his friend. I was afraid to stand up for Roger, because I knew that if you stand up for somebody like Roger, people will begin to say nasty things about you too. And so I kept my distance, and I failed to be the loving person that Christ wanted me to be. The work of the Holy Spirit was not evident in my life. If it had been, Roger might be alive today.

Today is the conclusion of the four-part series of messages I've been giving on the Holy Spirit. The main theme we see in today's Bible readings is that

the Holy Spirit works in us to produce change. Yes, the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness [Romans 8:26]; give us peace when life is hard [John 14:27; Romans 8:6]; and much more. Those are all wonderful blessings which God gives to us.

Today, though, I want to focus on transformation, growing to become more like Jesus. That is a recurring theme in the New Testament.

**Romans 12:1-2, Good News Bible:**

So then, my friends, because of God's great mercy to us I appeal to you: Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer. Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God—what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect.

Clearly, personal transformation isn't something we do by ourselves. I can transform my physical body by the food I eat and the exercise I do. Indeed, the Hollywood newsrags love to tell stories of actors who gained or lost 50 pounds in order to become the character in some movie. But that isn't the same as transforming my soul, the very essence of who I am.

William Temple put it this way:

It is no good giving me a play like Hamlet or King Lear, and telling me to write a play like that. Shakespeare could do it; I can't. And it is no good showing me a life like the life of Jesus and telling me to live a life like that. Jesus could do it; I can't. But if the genius of Shakespeare could come and live in me, then I could write plays like his. And if the Spirit of Jesus could come and live in me, then I could live a life like his.

That's exactly what the Holy Spirit does in us.

**2 Corinthians 3:17-18, New Living Translation:**

Now, the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, he gives freedom. And all of us have had that veil removed so that we can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him and reflect his glory even more.

“We become more and more like him”—that is, like the Lord, like Jesus.

This is what Tony Campolo regrets about his high school years: he was a Christian, at least in terms of what he believed. But it didn't show up in how he lived. It didn't show up in his character.

I wonder how many of us can say the same thing about our lives? I know I can. Lots of times. Probably you can, too.

That's why we need to continually open ourselves to the Holy Spirit.

## 2) The Holy Spirit is our Teacher

**John 14:26, New International Version:**

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

People who make a career out of training others know that the best way to teach something is to have the student *do* it. Leo Buscaglia teaches a university course called simply “Love.” They could spend weeks reading textbooks, and learn nothing about love. Early on in the course, the students are required to go to someone in their family and say, “I love you.” Someone, obviously, to whom they don't normally say that. Invariably, the students come back to the next class bursting with excitement about what happened.

The same principle works here. The Holy Spirit does not teach us things just for the sake of knowledge. It is so that we will *do* it. The most important thing for you to do when the Holy Spirit points out some new truth to you is to *immediately* put it into practice. Difficult? Yes. Embarrassing? Likely. Worth it? You bet!

Listen to how Tony Campolo (the same fellow I mentioned earlier in the high school story) responded some years later when confronted with an awkward situation. See if you think he has grown to be more like Jesus.

I head up an organization that has established a network of schools that serves children who have been reduced to a life that is pretty close to slavery... When I go down there I usually stay

at a Holiday Inn right in the center of Port-au-Prince. Once, when I was walking to the entrance of the hotel, I was intercepted by three girls. I call them girls because they looked to be about fifteen or sixteen years of age. The one in the middle said, "Mister, for ten dollars you can have me all night long." I was stunned by what she had said. I turned to the girl next to her and asked, "Can I have you for ten dollars?" She nodded approval.

I asked the third girl the same question. She tried to conceal her contempt for me with a smile. But it's hard to look sexy when you're fifteen or sixteen and you're very poor and your family is hungry. I said, "Fine! I've got thirty dollars! I'm in Room 210. You be up there in a half hour. I'll pay you then, and I want all three of you for the whole night!"

I rushed up to the room and got on the phone, and called down to the concierge desk. I said, "Send every Walt Disney cartoon video you have up to Room 210. Anything by Disney. Send it up to me." I called down to the restaurant and asked if they made banana splits. I told them that I wanted banana splits with extra everything. I wanted them to be huge and delicious. I wanted extra whipped cream, extra chocolate syrup, extra nuts.

Within the half hour the videos came, the three girls came, and the banana splits came. I sat the girls down on the edge of the bed. We ate the banana splits. We watched the videos. We had a little party as we watched the videos until about one in the morning. That's when the last of them fell asleep across the bed.

As I sat there in the stuffed chair looking at their little bodies strewn across the bed, I thought to myself, "Nothing's changed! Nothing's changed! Tomorrow they will be back on the streets. Tomorrow they will be selling their little bodies for ten dollars a throw, because there will always be rotten ugly men who will destroy the dignity of little girls for ten dollars a night. Nothing's changed."

Then the Holy Spirit spoke to me and said, "But, for one night, Tony, you let them be little girls again. For one night, you let them be kids. You didn't change their lives, but for one night you gave them back their childhoods."

Oh my friends, how much we need the Holy Spirit in our lives! Let us pray for that.