

Are We Open To The Influence Of The Holy Spirit?

What do I mean by being open to the Holy Spirit?

Openness is the humble recognition that we do not have everything and we don't know everything.

Revelation 3:17-18 [NIV] *“You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so that you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so that you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so that you can see.”*

This group of people were blinded to their own spiritual poverty.

How had they come to be in this state of spiritual poverty?

Revelation 3:15-16 [NIV] *“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”*

They were in a state of indifference towards their spiritual standing.

1 Thessalonians 5:19 [NIV] *“Do not put out the Spirit's fire;”*

The flame of enthusiasm for God and His righteousness had all but gone out.

What had brought them to this dangerous position?

Hebrews 5:11 [Message Bible] *“I have a lot more to say about this [eternal salvation], but it is hard to get it across to you since you have picked up this bad habit of not listening.”*

The underlying problem of the Hebrew Christians was they had become hard of hearing.

They had become closed to the point of not even being able to hear God any more.

Having made the dramatic move in their spiritual life from Judaism to Christianity they felt no need to be open to more revelation through the Holy Spirit.

Why is this lesson important?

The only link between us and the throne of grace is the Holy Spirit as He works in us through our “human” spirit. That spirit which makes us human.

Job 32:8 [NIV] *“But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding.”* [**Proverbs 20:27**].

Our ability to make choices to plan and construct from raw materials machines and great buildings is due to this spirit within us that other mammals do not have.

1 Corinthians 2:10-11 [NIV] *“but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no-one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.”*

Therefore we must maintain the best possible relationship with the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 4:30 [NIV] *“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”*

How do we grieve the Holy Spirit?

Ephesians 4:31-32 [NIV] *“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”*

One way we grieve the Holy Spirit is through bitterness that is the fruit of an unforgiving nature, also other selfish sins as listed here.

If our minds are closed to whatever the Sovereign God may wish to do or say we will miss out, just as Jews missed recognising the Messiah when He appeared.

Although God is the same yesterday, today and forever, He does **not** always reveal Himself in the same way to every generation.

It is not difficult to believe what God did yesterday, we have visible, historical proof.

What God is doing now or is about to do takes faith to accept, and an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit to be aware of God’s work in this generation.

The Pharisees felt themselves very pious because they affirmed *“yesterday’s men”*.

Those whom God had worked in and through in the past.

Matthew 23:29-30 [NIV] *“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’”*

They held on to what God had done in the past but in so doing missed out on God’s *“today man”* who was Jesus Christ, their looked-for Messiah.

Matthew 23:31-32 [NIV] *“So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers!”*

By rejecting Jesus Christ they were rejecting the work God was doing in their generation.

John 14:15-18 [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”*

If we are not open to what the Holy Spirit is doing in our generation we too will be rejecting Jesus Christ as the Pharisees did in their generation.

It is often true that the greatest opposition towards what God is doing today comes from those who became a part of what God did yesterday.

What God is doing in the present is usually changed sufficiently from what He did previously in order to test our love for Him and true openness to the Holy Spirit.

Enoch, Noah and Abraham all *“walked”* with God, but what God did to reveal Himself to these men and their generation differed greatly.

All the people listed in Hebrews chapter eleven faced new and unprecedented challenges in their own generation.

We may say, *“I could never die like the martyrs of old.”*

I reply:

Luke 16:10 [NIV] *“Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.”*

If we are willing to embrace the way God is working through the Holy Spirit today and the stigma that comes with it, we join the ranks of God’s faithful people.

Why be open to Holy Spirit?

Hebrews 3:7-11 [NIV] *“So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did. That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.’ So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘**They shall never enter my rest.**’”*

The answer is because God still speaks today, through the Holy Spirit sent at Christ’s request by the Father.

God’s Word, The Bible, is infallible and unchanging.

God gave The Bible yesterday but the Holy Spirit applies it to today.

The application of God’s Word by the Holy Spirit will focus on an aspect of that Word which will be a challenging and offensive for today, this generation.

The Holy Spirit continues to speak clearly, directly and immediately through

- a) **prophecy** – inspired preaching.
- b) **revelation** – of knowledge of God’s Word through personal prayer and study.
- c) **vision** – opening of our eyes to understand this present generation’s needs.

The Holy Spirit will never, never conflict or contradict anything in The Bible, only make it clearer!

The Holy Spirit speaking today is **not** new revelation or in competition with The Bible [like the Book of Mormon or The Koran – which contradict the Word of God].

The proof of the Holy Spirit’s voice or manifestation will always be that it vindicates and magnifies The Bible.

The Holy Spirit will **not** deceive us.

If we are on good terms with the Holy Spirit, we will know what He is *“in”* and *“behind”* and what He is *“doing”* and *“saying”*.

The Holy Spirit will not let those in whom He dwells *“ungrieved”* miss out on what is the *“cutting edge”* [in Heaven’s eyes] for this generation.

How may we know if we are open to the Holy Spirit?

We have to prayerfully ask ourselves the question ‘*Are we open to what the Holy Spirit is seeking to tell us in our **hearts** as well as in our minds?*’

Acts 16:13-15 [NIV] “*On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshipper of God. **The Lord opened her heart** to respond to Paul’s message. When she and the members of her household were baptised, she invited us to her home. “If you consider me a believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my house.” And she persuaded us.*”

The Greek word translated heart is “*kardia*” meaning “*the centre of thoughts and feelings.*”

We have the brief but beautiful account of Lydia being moved by the Holy Spirit from the position of believing in her mind [obedience to the Sabbath law and assembling to pray and worship God] to opening her heart and her whole life to God.

Lydia’s response to Paul’s message was instantly becoming a powerful witness to the rest of her family and to persuade Paul and those with him to accept her hospitality.

It is possible to be open to Holy Spirit [God] in our mind by giving His commands intellectual obedience yet **not** open our hearts.

What causes this lack of transfer from mind to heart?

I believe the answer is encompassed in one word, fear.

Fear of what might be involved in our lives, what God may expect of us if we opened our heart [thoughts and feelings] to the Holy Spirit.

Fear of surrendering our will and future to the Holy Spirit.

What causes this fear to block offering our heart to God?

I believe it is a lack of “*experiencing*” the love of God in our lives and our intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit prompting our thoughts and feelings.

When we love another human being, our wife, husband or child, our thoughts and feelings are paramount to that relationship.

Our relationship with Holy Spirit [God] needs to be similar.

What is needed on our part is the courage to take the first step towards such a relationship, what then follows is the work of the Holy Spirit Himself.

2 Timothy 1:7 [NIV] “*For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.*”

Romans 12:1 [NIV] “*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.*”

That first step I took of surrender to the Holy Spirit [God] took courage but it was really out of pure gratitude of what God had done for me through Jesus Christ.

From that moment on my changed life has been one of joy and peace of mind.

To open up to the Holy Spirit in this way will make us vulnerable to unprotected attacks from this godless world that is at present governed mostly by Satan.

Are we willing to be hurt or embarrassed because of our beliefs and lifestyle?

Or are we still putting up defences in our minds?

Are we still making excuses why we should not get totally involved in what God is doing?

Are we still worrying about our reputation among family, friends and workmates?

1 Thessalonians 5:19 [NIV] *“Do not put out the Spirit’s fire;”*

Such thoughts and actions listed above could be putting out the “fire” of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Ephesians 4:29-31 [NIV] *“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.”*

Are we still unforgiving of those whom we feel have hurt us?

Bitterness is the fruit of an unforgiving spirit.

Slander is outcome of bitterness, our wishing to “get back at” the other person.

If our relationship with the Holy Spirit is “quenched” or “grieved” then there cannot be any openness towards the Holy Spirit.

Checklist for ensuring openness to the Holy Spirit.

a) Be sure there is no unconfessed sins in our lives.

1 John 1:8-10 [NIV] *“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.”*

b) Be sure we are not holding on to any bitterness or grudge against anyone.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 [NIV] *“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”*

Love keeps no record of wrongs and always hopes the best in others.

c) Be sure we do not speak out against anyone.

James 3:6 [NIV] *“The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.”*

The tongue can be a powerful tool for God but if not controlled by love can cause great harm.

d) Be sure we have a solid foundation in our lives of prayer and study.

2 Timothy 2:15 [NIV] *“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”*

Luke 18:1 [NIV] *“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.”*

Our attitude towards prayer is expanded in the two parables that follow this statement.

e) Walk in all the light [revelation] that God gives us.

1 John 1:7 [NIV] *“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”*

f) Learn to recognise the Holy Spirit’s voice.

Hebrews 3:7-8 [NIV] *“So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert,”*

g) Develop a relationship with Holy Spirit to know His way of working and to recognise His presence.

Hebrews 3:10-11 [NIV] *“That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray, and **they have not known my ways.**’ So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’”*

Some warnings.

Do not assume you are open to the Holy Spirit today just because you were yesterday. Our relationship with Holy Spirit is always current.

Do not assume that you are open to Holy Spirit because you have taken a personal stand against some issue.

For example:-

Abortion and God’s abhorrence of it, found by personal inspiration of scripture on the issue or sound Biblical teaching.

This could be result of a gift given to us by Holy Spirit but **not** what openness to Holy Spirit would show us He wants to be instrumental in doing through us.

Don’t assume that you are open to the Holy Spirit because God is blessing you with prosperity, a good job, healing, etc.

What is the consequence to **not** being open to the Holy Spirit?

Not entering into God’s rest.

Hebrews 3:7-11 [NIV] *“So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did. That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.’ So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘**They shall never enter my rest.**’”*

Not being taught by Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 5:11 [NIV] *“We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn.”*

Not recognising where Holy Spirit is working.

Not be at peace with ourselves.

Conclusion:

Openness to Holy Spirit is:-

- 1) An admission of total dependence on the Holy Spirit working in and through us.
- 2) To constantly ensuring that we are a fit vehicle through whom Holy Spirit can work. [Holy Spirit ungrieved and the fire He generates in us burning bright].
- 3) To constantly be available to do whatever Holy Spirit chooses to give us to do or to God wherever He leads us.