

WEEK 3: EXERCISE #1

Have you seen *The King's Speech*? It is the story of an English royal named Bertie who was second in line to succeed King Edward VII. His brother, Edward, was the rightful successor, a fact that Bertie saw as a great mercy. He had no aspirations to the throne for all kinds of reasons, the most serious being a severe stutter that made his public life a living hell.

When their father died, Edward succeeded him, but not happily. He was dating a divorced American, and she would not be welcomed into royalty. After a year of tortured service, Edward abdicated the throne, the first king in British history to do so. His brother, Bertie, became the next king, George VI. And as it turns out, he was exactly the right man at the right time. He led England through World War II with remarkable dignity and refused to leave London even when bombs hit Buckingham Palace.

Monarchs bear an incredible responsibility. They stand in the line of all those who have gone before and are responsible for upholding all the values and victories that were established before them. It is a heavy honor. No wonder King George VI was reluctant to take the crown.

In the same way, we who stand in the great line of those who follow Jesus and who share the glory of being children of God are responsible for upholding all the values and victories that were established before us. When we claim a spiritual inheritance, it is ours to carry forward.

Reread Ephesians 1:13–14. Try memorizing it.

We've all seen this scene in the movies: someone's wealthy relative has died and the family has gathered in the lawyer's office to hear the

SPIRIT

ENCOUNTER THE

reading of the will. They are dressed in black. Grief is in the air, but also an atmosphere of anticipation. “What am I getting?” seems to be the question on everyone’s mind.

The Holy Spirit is our inheritance. But unlike a rich relative, He doesn’t want us to wait until later to receive Him as a gift. He wants us to invite Him in *now*, to be empowered by Him *now*.

This passage in Ephesians is a key to understanding exactly how salvation and the Holy Spirit work in our lives. This passage is about *you*!

Look up the following verses. What does each one teach us about how the Holy Spirit works in our lives?

- Luke 12:12
- John 6:63
- John 14:26
- Romans 8:26
- 1 Corinthians 2:10
- 1 John 5:6

SPIRIT

ENCOUNTER THE

Imagine what it would feel like to know that one of your children felt like a servant in your home. What would you say to that confused child? Do you think the Spirit may want to say those same things to you?

Which of these promises do you need to claim to fully embrace your status as a child in God's family?

Rewrite Ephesians 1:13–14 (ESV) using first-person language. Include your own name at least once. For instance:

“In him *I, Carolyn*, when *I* heard the word of truth, the gospel of *my* salvation, and believed in him, *I was* sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of *my* inheritance until *I, Carolyn Moore*, acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

How does hearing this passage, as if written for you and by you, change the meaning of it?

Do you hear a personal charge in this truth?

What new thoughts come to mind when you hear this as your promise? How does it strengthen your faith?

SPIRIT

ENCOUNTER THE

Do you have assurance that you personally have already been sealed with the promised Holy Spirit? If not, why not? If so, how are you spending your inheritance?

Encounter

Read Galatians 4:1–7.

Paul said, “*Because* you are his sons [and daughters], God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’ So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir” (italics added).

Make two columns in your journal or on a piece of paper. Mark one column “Child of God” and the other “Servant of God.”

List the things in each column that define or characterize these two groups. What makes a child in a family different from a servant of that same family?

Which list seems more similar to your relationship to God?

Do you see yourself as a child of God or as a servant?

ENCOUNTER THE SPIRIT

How has the Holy Spirit confirmed in your spirit your place as a son or daughter in God's house?

Spend some time now in your journal with these questions:

Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? And do you have Him in your life now?

Are you getting together regularly with a few other Spirit-filled people so that the kingdom of God is growing in you? If not, could it be that you might be holding something back spiritually?

Is it possible you are trying to do religion without walking in the Spirit? In *Walking in the Supernatural*, Bill Johnson writes:

You see, with an inheritance we get for free what someone else paid for. We can inherit graces from the Lord without going through some of the processes a previous generation had to go through. A spiritual inheritance is meant to make us more effective and efficient in our representation of the King and His Kingdom. While a natural inheritance gives us something we did not have before, a spiritual inheritance pulls back the curtain and reveals what we already have permission to possess. We were never intended to start over from scratch every two or three generations. God wants to put each generation at a higher level than the previous one. Every generation has a ceiling experience that becomes the next generation's floor. The things we take for granted today cost the previous generation tremendously.⁴

WEEK 3: EXERCISE #2

A local radio station once asked its morning listeners to dream up new apps for their smart phones and call into the station with their ideas. Listeners began calling in with their bright ideas. Funny, though. Most of the things people mentioned were apps that had already been developed. They just didn't know it!

Much like those callers, we can want for things God has already made available to us. God may be inviting us into a depth and richness we can't even imagine, and we can miss out, for the simple lack of understanding.

Read Ephesians 1:15–20.

Paul is praying for his friends in Ephesus who have come to believe in Jesus. He knows they are at the beginning of a great adventure, so he prays that the eyes of their hearts will be enlightened.

Underline all the words and phrases that describe what occurs when our hearts are enlightened.

If you had to put a one-word heading to this passage, what word would you use?

From Paul's lesson to the Ephesians, we learn that when we're filled with the Holy Spirit, there is a definite shift in perspective. We gain knowledge of our hope, our inheritance, and His greatness. The eyes of our hearts are enlightened.

There is a difference, however, between gaining access and receiving the gift. I suspect many of us have not yet received the spiritual gifts we have

SPIRIT

ENCOUNTER THE

been offered. As I described in the video teaching, it is something like my laptop. It is a powerful little tool. My computer has the ability to take what's in my calendar, cupboard, or checkbook and produce for me a schedule, a casserole, or a budget. Everything I need to live a more organized, effective life is right there in my laptop.

So what do I use it for? Aside from surfing the net, I use it to process words. I have no clue how to make a chart. I have never once asked my laptop to sort through the food in my cabinet to create a recipe. Mostly, for me, this computer is a glorified typewriter. I use it to type.

This is similar to our relationship with the Holy Spirit. According to Paul, we have access to the whole package when we come to believe. We have power over life and truth and darkness, and yet so often we settle for the spiritual equivalent of word processing. We have not yet allowed the Holy Spirit to enlighten the eyes of our hearts.

People in the Bible get the Holy Spirit in lots of different ways. In the book of Acts, we see people receiving the Holy Spirit at the moment they come to believe in Jesus, and also at the moment God calls them to a new work. We also see people getting filled with the Spirit before they are baptized and at the moment they are baptized. We see people receiving the Holy Spirit long after they have come to believe in Jesus.

Here's a question: At what point on the journey with Jesus does a person receive the Holy Spirit?

And here's an answer: whenever God chooses!

ENCOUNTER THE SPIRIT

Do you believe you've made the most of your relationship with the Holy Spirit? What instances can you point toward?

Encounter

When Paul heard of the faith of the people of Ephesus, his first response was to pray. Using Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1 as a guide, take time to write a prayer to God, expressing your hopes for your relationship with Him.

What do you want to know more about?

What are your fears?

What keeps you from the good life offered in Christ?

If you could focus the Holy Spirit's resources on any area in your life, what would it be? What would the results look like?

Reread Ephesians 1:18.

Have you fully accepted the riches of God—the Holy Spirit within? Have you invited Him into your life? Have you asked Him to fill you, to baptize you, to come upon you? Are you willing to do so now?

Come, Holy Spirit, and fill me. Enlighten the eyes of my heart, that I may know what is the hope to which You have called me, the riches of Your glorious inheritance, and the immeasurable greatness of Your power toward us who believe. According to the working of Your great might, place all things in my life under Your power as I surrender them to You in Jesus' name. Amen.

WEEK 3: EXERCISE #3

This fact probably does not shock you: a lot of *good* people go to church and call themselves Christians but have no clue about the Holy Spirit. It is true! Far too many sit in pews (or chairs) every week hoping they've been saved *from* hell, but have no clue they've also been saved *for* joy.

If that's been your experience, I hope you hear that it is okay to start where you are. Start there . . . but don't stay there. Seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Read Acts 19:1–10.

Make a timeline of events in this passage. How much time passes in these ten verses?

When this passage opens, how many believers do we meet?

How many believers do you find in verse 10?

What do you conclude about the work of the Holy Spirit?

Describe Paul using only words found in this passage.

ENCOUNTER THE SPIRIT

Describe the process the new believers went through in verses 5–6.

Believing Gentiles have been told about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Apollos has been a faithful teacher of this good news, so they have the facts. What they are missing is the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Paul sees the gap and asks an epic question: “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” He then baptizes them in Jesus’ name, demonstrating the connection between the gospel of Jesus and the filling of the Holy Spirit. Hear this: *these are not separate truths but points on the same spiritual journey.*

Many of us who were raised in mainline denominations or in some fundamentalist churches can honestly say we were taught *about* Jesus. Much like the first-century believers to whom Paul addressed this question, we may have been given the basic facts about Christianity. We were probably baptized and even may have completed a confirmation class. But the Holy Spirit? “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

I’ve had the joy of watching a brother in Christ as he finally laid down an addiction to alcohol. Now in his fifties, he had his first drink when he was eight; and over decades his addiction was his god, wreaking havoc on relationships, finances, and emotional stability. Intuitively, he knew there was a spiritual solution to his problem, but all his adult life he chased after that answer with a bottle in his hand. He dropped in and out of churches, never finding peace because he’d only managed to hear or accept half the gospel.

SPIRIT

ENCOUNTER THE

Then, two things changed for him. First, he finally completed the act of repentance by laying down the destructive drinking habit. Then, sometime later, he got filled with the Holy Spirit. Sometime after that, I remember receiving a very happy text from him. It had no words in it, only a long line of smiley faces. When I asked what that was about, he responded, “It keeps getting better. Six months of joy and counting.”⁵

That’s the result of walking in the Spirit. It is about moving beyond fire insurance to the place where we experience joy.

“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” Great question, Paul! How would you respond?

Encounter

Did *you* receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?

Take some extended time and ponder this question and record your honest reflections in your journal (“I’m not sure” or “I don’t know” are perfectly legitimate responses).

Or better yet, ask a friend to process this question with you. Take turns asking each other this question and carefully listen to each other’s responses. Pray for each other, for God to fill you both with His Holy Spirit.

Is it possible circumstances are in your life—habits or lack of knowledge—that hinder your ability to encounter the Spirit? Journal about this and make it a matter of personal prayer.

WEEK 3: EXERCISE #4

Too often, I hear folks say things such as, “I don’t get the God of the Old Testament. He’s nothing like Jesus.” I have a friend in seminary who was actually angry that he had to take a class in Old Testament history. He just didn’t see the relevance. Then he took the class, and now he gets it!

The God of the Bible is full of mercy, compassion, and wisdom. In the Old Testament, we learn that from the beginning He has had a plan, and slowly He is working out that plan among His people. Often, the Old Testament stories are a taste of what’s to come.

Read the following two stories, one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament, making notes as you go of any interesting ideas that surface. Pay attention especially to the nature and effect of floods.

Read the story of Noah and the flood in Genesis 7:1—9:17 (for the whole story, start at the beginning of chap. 6). **Now read the story of Pentecost in Acts 2:1–4.**

Wondering what these two events have in common? They are both flood stories. As the story of Noah and his flood is wrapping up, a rainbow appears as a sign to God. This is how God remembers His promise to us. God writes a memo to help Him remember! The rainbow is the sign of a promise: from that day forward, any flood God sends over the whole earth will be redemptive, not destructive.

Now fast forward to Acts 2 and another flood story—Pentecost. In this flood, God pours out His Holy Spirit to cover the whole earth.

SPIRIT

ENCOUNTER THE

Here is a quick look at how these two stories compare:

NOAH'S FLOOD	PENTECOST
God pours water over the whole earth in a physical flood.	God pours His Holy Spirit over the whole earth in a spiritual flood.
Humanity is destroyed as a punishment for sin.	Humanity's sin is covered by grace.
The flood has a beginning and an end.	The flood of the Holy Spirit has no end.
After the flood, God commands Noah and his family to be fruitful and multiply in order to repopulate the world.	Those who receive the Holy Spirit are commanded to be spiritually fruitful and multiply by sharing the good news of Jesus with the world.

In the Genesis account, no one was more changed by God's outpouring than Noah, who became bold in his desire to partner with God for the redemption of the world. In the Acts account, no one was more changed by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost than Peter. It wasn't that he was suddenly doing something differently than he'd been doing the past three years. Peter had preached before. He'd been with the teams that went out to heal people and proclaim the kingdom of God. The change for Peter was an internal work. And the result was miraculous; three thousand people trusted in Jesus as Messiah.

That's what it looks like when we begin to flow in the river of the Holy Spirit. There is a surrender, a willingness to let the ripples happen. A boat gets built, and humanity is saved. A sermon is preached, and three thousand people get saved.

ENCOUNTER THE SPIRIT

People moving and operating in the power of the Holy Spirit are part of something bigger, much bigger, than themselves. I am convinced this flow into the Spirit is the difference between going to church and going with God. When we submit to being filled, we become part of a movement that cannot be contained. Our widening understanding of God creates a widening impact.

To enter into sanctification is to allow the Holy Spirit of God to flow through us by empowering, equipping, and energizing our journey with Jesus.

As I compare the stories of Noah and Pentecost, I learn a few things about spiritual floods:

1. Some floods destroy things that need to be destroyed.
2. Some floods create hope where hope is fading.
3. Sometimes, just before a flood, we will be invited to jump in and trust God. How we answer that question will determine whether or not we move when He moves.

Knowing these things helps us to know the next step. Some of us are right there. We are standing *on* the edge, and we know we're being invited to jump in. We're in that crisis moment when we have to make a choice.

Some of us need to be flooded with the Holy Spirit so that the things separating us from God can be destroyed, and only righteousness survives.

Some of us need a fresh sign of hope. We need renewal and new life in our relationship with Jesus. We need to get back into the river, to get back into the flow of the Spirit.

In the midst of these choices, where do you find yourself? What decisions do you need to make so that when God moves, you are with Him for the journey?

Encounter

We are nearing the halfway mark in this study. It's time to do a personal inventory. Find a separate piece of paper (not attached to your journal), and write down a few sentences about what you know and what you have received of the Holy Spirit. These questions may help as you make notes:

Where was I spiritually when I began this study?

Have I noticed changes in my perception of the Holy Spirit?

Where do I see God at work in my life right now?

What questions have been answered?

What are my questions today?

Allow this page of notes to represent where you are today—a marker of progress. Place this marker in your journal or in this guidebook, and as you continue with this study, add notes to it. When you learn or experience something new or as personal revelations occur, keep moving this marker forward so that it represents the progress you're making.

WEEK 3: EXERCISE #5

The king of Aram (Syria) was at war with Israel. He had a plan to set up camp at a certain place so his army could attack Israel when their army came by. It might have worked, but Elisha, a prophet of God, saw what the king was up to and foiled his plan. That infuriated the king, so he decided to go after Elisha himself.

Read the whole story in 2 Kings 6:8–23.

What is the reaction of Elisha's servant when he sees the army of the Syrians?

What is Elisha's reaction when the servant points out the army?

Write Elisha's prayer (2 Kings 6:17, 20) as a heading on a journal page, using first-person language: "Open my eyes so I can see."

When Elisha's servant saw their predicament, he was petrified. Elisha, on the other hand, was as cool as a cucumber (as we say in the South). He told his servant, "There are more of us than there are of them." From the servant's perspective, that made no sense; they were surrounded by the enemy. Two of us, a bazillion of them. Do the math.

What the servant didn't see was what was occurring on the spiritual plane. The king's army was no match for *The King's* army.

SPIRIT

ENCOUNTER THE

“Open his eyes, LORD, so that he may see” (v. 17). What a great prayer. This is the prayer of any follower of Jesus who earnestly wants *more*, who earnestly seeks after the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I don’t know about you, but that’s where I want to live. I want to walk in the Spirit, and when I look at the challenges in my life, I want to be able to see what God sees.

Elisha’s story teaches us about watching for where God is at work so we can join Him.

Are you trying to fight a spiritual battle on the physical plane?

Are you hungry to learn how to see beyond the natural in everyday struggles—at work, in your home life, at church?

The book of Acts begins much like this story from Elisha’s life. When the followers of Jesus are still with Him, they are confused about what happens next. They still see their earthly enemies—the corrupt government of Israel—as having all the power. Then, they are filled with the Holy Spirit, and in the blink of an eye, they are given spiritual vision. They are flooded with the Holy Spirit, and what they encounter exceeds their wildest dreams.

Read Acts 2:22–41. Now, reread it.

With your Bible closed, paraphrase this passage. Tell the story Peter tells, in your own words.

ENCOUNTER THE SPIRIT

In this passage, Peter—suddenly empowered with authority to tell the story—gives a remarkable account of what has occurred. He puts the facts into an eternal perspective, and he pulls no punches. God sent Jesus, the eternal Son of the Father, into the world, and the people crucified Him. Then Jesus was raised from the dead, conquering death and sin and releasing two gifts into the world for all who trust and believe in His message: the forgiveness of sins and baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Through Peter's boldness in preaching this message, the Holy Spirit stirred the hearts of three thousand people, and a movement was born. In those early days, that movement was like a flood. But today, in too many places, it has been reduced to a trickle.

What do you suppose we're missing? What are we not seeing?

As you take stock of the challenges you are facing today, are you more like Elisha or his servant? The servant was doing the only thing he knew to do. He stuck his head out of the tent flap and reported what he saw. His mistake was assuming that what he physically could see was all there was to see. Elisha had been given spiritual eyes to see the true nature of the battle.

Elisha gives us a great place to begin any encounter with the Spirit: "Open our eyes, Lord, so that we may see."

Encounter

You've already created a heading on a journal page, using the prayer of Elisha.

Use the rest of the page to list places where you suspect you may be dealing on the natural plane with things that need a supernatural defense.

ENCOUNTER THE SPIRIT

Are you guilty of assuming that your analysis of the situation represents reality? Ask God to show you where He is at work.

Breath prayers are an ancient practice that help us with a deep, spiritual need we have with the Spirit of God. It is, quite simply, a one-sentence prayer addressed to God that expresses the heart of a need.

Let's make Elisha's prayer into a breath prayer, addressed specifically to the Holy Spirit, that we can use this week to express a deep, spiritual need: "Holy Spirit, open my eyes that I may see."

Memorize this prayer, and repeat it often in the course of your day. Because it is short, it can be prayed often and in a single breath as a response to any situation that seems too big for us. A breath prayer can help return us to what matters most.

Write Elisha's prayer on a sticky note, and put it where you will see it often. Or make it an alarm on your phone, to remind you to return to this prayer throughout your day.