

Building in the Power of the Holy Spirit

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- [0 : 0 0] What is the deepest human need? Our colleagues from Alpha went out around the world and they asked people, and this is what they said.
- Deepest human need? Oh gosh, trying to narrow that down. I don't know. Being happy with what you have. It's family, man.
- That's all you got. Money, career, TV. I think no TV. I can't leave. Love. Love.
- TV love. Food. Maslow's hierarchy of needs. That was the bottom. Sex, food. Love, affection. I'll still stick with food.
- The vaccine is like... Love. Love. To feel loved. I think it would be love. When I do find out, I'll let you know.
- [1 : 0 6] It's on this weekend, if like me, with millions of others across the world, we watched love being played out in an amazing setting.
- And that amazing preach by Bishop Michael. And I promise you, I did write my sermon on Tuesday, so I just didn't do a straight lift, which would have been really handy.
- It's about love. It's about love. It's not about possessions. It's not about money. It's about this essence of love. And on this Pentecost Sunday, we experience, and the disciples had experienced, what love really meant.
- That redemptive power that had been promised. The disciples had been gathered. They'd been waiting. They were disciples. They were disciplined.
- They were told to wait. And they did. And they were expectant of something that was going to come. This great thing that Jesus had promised.
- [2 : 0 9] And when it came, life was transformed. They were not disappointed. And it spoke of tongues of fire resting on their heads. And this sense of tongues, this sort of visual interpretation of what they were actually going to do, because they spoke and enabled all these people that had gathered.
- God's timing was absolutely amazing. These people had been gathered from all over, expecting, just coming along, maybe. I don't know what they came for. But they certainly didn't expect what they were going to hear because they heard in their own language the saving power of Jesus.
- And then there was this thing about fire. And I don't know whether anybody's witnessed the wildfire. But, you know, it sort of starts with nothing. And then it just grows and consumes everything in its path.
- And that was the day of Pentecost. This wildfire that suddenly went from these small beginnings out across. And 2,000 years later, I've got to ask us, do you feel the fire?
- Do you feel the fire? Because it hasn't stopped. I was invited to a conference sometime back.
- [3 : 3 3] It's nice to be invited to go in weeks teaching. And they had this idea that you come at the beginning, and I think they're sort of trying you out to see what you're like for the week.

But they do this thing where they sit you down in front of everybody, introduce you, and then they give you a theme. And then they give you an item to talk about. And it was great.

I sat on this chair, done my introductions, and he said, the theme we're going to give you is the Holy Spirit. I thought, that's a bit of a gift, as it is. And then the next thing they handed me was a hand grenade.

I thought, how does this work? It must have been the Holy Spirit. And I sat there just thinking for a minute, praying, how's this going to work? And they said, they set this timer, and you get two minutes.

And off we went. And it was great. And I thought, actually, on the day of Pentecost, there was this explosive power.

[4 : 39] But the difference with this power was it wasn't destructive. It was empowering by the fact that instead of sending shrapnel into people to Maine, actually, what if this was like the Holy Spirit?

And actually, it sent the gift of love out into people's lives. And so this explosive power for all of us would actually spread out and embed itself into people.

And that's exactly what it did on the day of Pentecost. They went out, and people were changed and transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And I was sensing then that, you know, the Lord gives you verses like we've heard this morning. And this thing from Isaiah about, you know, they will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. It is about love. You see, we can celebrate a festival of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and we can think, what does that mean to us?

[5 : 57] And it has to mean something. It has to mean something that embeds itself in us, because and through us, in order to reach the people that God is calling us to do.

And Jesus promised, and it was delivered. The gift was given. Do you know, I've been a Christian for years.

I'd been, I did all the right things. I went to church. I sat in the pew. I knew my liturgy. Do you know what? It took a moment for me to actually ask and receive the Holy Spirit, for me to fulfill that which I felt God was doing.

And I suddenly realized there had been something missing. Jesus knew about the coming of the Holy Spirit. And I don't know what you're like at giving gifts.

I don't know. I like to think a lot of thought goes into my gifts. And I excelled myself this year, I have to say, on Mandy's birthday. She didn't have a clue what was coming.

[7 : 04] It was great. But I want you to imagine if you'd put a lot of thought into a gift that you were going to give to somebody, and you gave them the gift.

And worse still, they rejected it. You'd put all that love, all that thought, all that hope, in that you would see the beauty on people's face when they opened it and they rejected it.

But maybe worse still, there's somebody opened the gift and they never used it. You see, on this day of Pentecost, we have to actually acknowledge that this gift is here for each and every one of us if we choose to accept it.

In America, every year at this small town, the revival tent used to arrive with evangelists. They'd come into town.

They'd set up the evangelistic tent. People would flock in and they would hear this amazing preaching. And there would be this call to respond to the Holy Spirit.

- [8 : 15] And there was a guy in the town called Jake. Everybody knew Jake. He was the town drunk. He was, as they would say in America, a bum.
- And as they did the call, Jake would run down to the front. He would kneel and he would scream, Fill me, Lord.
- Fill me. Jake would be dry for a few months. He'd get a job.
- He'd even go to the tin church, the Baptist chapel on the corner. But then, a few months later, he'd go back to drinking. And Jake would become the same old Jake.
- Next year, the revival tent would come. There would be a call from the front. Jake would be the first one down the front. Fill me, Lord. Fill me to overflowing.
- [9 : 13] He would be filled with the Holy Spirit. A few months later, he would be back where he was. This went on year after year. And Jake would run down the front. And on this particular year, he ran down the front.
- He shouted out, Fill me, Lord. And a lady from the back stood up and said, Don't do it, Lord. He leaks. And I thought, That is so much our journey, isn't it?
- You see, there may be people here who said, I went to Spring Harvest in 1975, and I got filled with the Holy Spirit. I had an amazing service last Sunday.
- I came for prayer, and I was filled with the Holy Spirit. Do you know what? I went home, and I knelt down in my room, and I asked the Lord to fill me with the Holy Spirit.
- But on Monday morning, I went to work, and I found that one of my colleagues hasn't done what they were supposed to do.
- [10 : 20] And I leaped. I drove out down the motorway, and somebody cut me up. I leaped really badly. I had a word, maybe a thought, that came into my mind about somebody who maybe I just hadn't got on with.
- And I leaped. You see, Paul, when he had this amazing transformation experience on the road to Damascus, where he had persecuted Christians again and again and again, and suddenly had this inbreaking of meeting with Jesus and this empowering of the Holy Spirit, suddenly, he was filled.
- And filled. And filled. But he knew that he would leak. And so Paul says quite clearly in Scripture that it isn't just the filling.
- The actual description is being filled again and again and again. We need to ask again and again and again to be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- And again, we are in God's loving and redemptive power that fills us to be the people who God has called us to be.
- [11 : 36] You see, there is this sense that none of us want to be this floppy Christian because so often that's what we can become.
- Unfilled, unproductive with what the Holy Spirit wants to do in us and through us. And it says that you can notice people by the Holy Spirit in them. And I want to see more of this in me as you want to see it more in you.
- This sense of love. This sense of joy. Of patience. Of kindness. Of goodness.
- Faithfulness. Gentleness. And perhaps most important amongst Christians. Self-control. That goes with love.
- You see, because when you've got those things, people tend to notice. They notice the love. They notice the love that's in us because we are filled to overflowing with the love of God.

[12 : 46] And that is what's going to change our world. As the bishop said very helpfully, you know, what would change our world? The changing is because Jesus called us to do this and the Holy Spirit comes and helps us to do that which Jesus asks us to do.

When did you last ask for the Holy Spirit to come into your life? The thing is, there's lots of things that will, as we've heard, you know, fear of the future, fear of what happens.

We just ask the Holy Spirit to come. We just ask the Holy Spirit to come.