

Living a
Spirit-Filled
Life

Practical Lessons From Elijah

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Contents

	Author's Note	7
Chapter 1	The Holy Spirit at Work	9
Chapter 2	Fire on Mount Carmel	18
Chapter 3	The Coming Drought and Famine	25
Chapter 4	Waiting for the Holy Spirit	40
Chapter 5	Filled With the Holy Spirit	57
Chapter 6	A Continual Filling of the Holy Spirit	66
Chapter 7	Be an Abider	89
Chapter 8	The Abiding Life	102
Chapter 9	What Happens When We Do Not Abide Daily?	117
Chapter 10	Special Outpourings of the Holy Spirit	129
Chapter 11	Being Ready to Meet Jesus	139
Chapter 12	Springs of Living Water	150

The Holy Spirit at Work

We huddled together around a cooking fire in a jungle village. Darkness was settling over the chief's house as we finished our meal of rice, beans, and greens from the garden, with tropical bananas for dessert. I was conducting a field school of evangelism and conducting evangelistic meetings in the village. I sat spellbound, listening to pastors share the miracles of God in the lives of the villagers. I was supposed to be the instructor, but actually, I was the one learning. I was learning about a mountain-moving faith that was God honored.

I heard about how an entire village learned of Jesus and the message of the Bible. But the message was counter to the villagers' superstitious ways. When they heard what the Bible says about the second coming of Jesus, descending from heaven with angels and trumpets, the villagers were skeptical. So God sent an angel choir at 3:00 A.M. to light up the night sky and wake the villagers with their singing. In awe, the villagers stared into the night sky as the angels sang in perfect harmony. To their astonishment, they saw played out in real life a portion of the Bible study they had heard. They became believers in the Creator God of heaven and Earth.

When the pastors told me about praying over the body of a dead man and seeing him restored to life, I cross-examined them like a lawyer in a courtroom. "How many days was he dead?" I asked. "Are you sure he wasn't just in a coma? Are you sure he—" But the pastors chorused together, "It really happened, Pastor Kurt!"

Then they told me about a devil-worshiping priest who was converted. He told them that he needed human sacrifices for his special rituals. He hid outside villages in the dark, and when someone wandered too far, he captured them to use as a sacrifice. But when the priest came near a Christian village, he saw a bright light encircling the houses and

tall men with swords guarding the village!

As I listened to these stories during the fast-paced weeks I was there, I began to ask myself, *Why don't we see such miracles in my country? Does God reveal Himself through the Holy Spirit differently in some countries than He does in others?*

A few days before I left the village for my home in North America, a church elder sought me out and said, "Pastor Johnson, I am giving Bible studies to a family who are not Christians. The elderly grandmother is very sick and in a wheelchair. Will you please come and anoint her?"

We arrived at the home, and I was introduced to the family—a husband and wife, a grandma who was ill, and a teenage granddaughter. The church elder translated for me as I read the words of Jesus recorded in Matthew 9:20–22. These verses describe the healing of a woman who was sick for twelve years. Jesus said to her, " 'Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well.' And the woman was made well from that hour" (verse 22).

Turning in my Bible to James 5, I read: "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (verses 14, 15).

I then explained that the oil in my hand represented the Holy Spirit. I shared that the Holy Spirit was God and that by placing the oil on Grandma's forehead, we were setting her apart for God and asking Him to heal her. This was all new to the family. They had never heard anything like this before! As we left their home, the church elder and I stopped along the roadside, bowed our heads, and asked God to heal Grandma as a witness to the family that He did exist and was more powerful than the superstitions and beliefs they served.

A month after I had settled back into my daily routine at my home in Washington State, a letter arrived in the mail. God had preserved Grandma's life from her illness, and the family was being baptized. I knelt beside my desk and thanked God for His healing power and witness to this dear village family.

The Holy Spirit still works

As I reflected on the work of the Holy Spirit in that small corner of

the world, I was reminded of the following words of Jesus:

- “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” (Luke 11:13).
- “Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. . . . However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth” (John 16:7, 13).

What is this “advantage” that Jesus spoke about? He explains the advantage in John 14:16–18: “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.”

Jesus tells us in these verses that the Holy Spirit, whom He would send, will “dwell” or live within each follower of His. Then Jesus says, “I will come to you.” What does Jesus mean when He says, “I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you”? The apostle Paul explains what Jesus means: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

This is a life-changing truth for the Christian: Jesus lives within us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit!

Jesus took on human form when He was born as a baby on this earth, which means that He could be in only one place at a time. But the Holy Spirit can minister to all people at the same time.

The Bible evidence indicates that the heavenly Trio—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—are God. The Three together make up the Godhead. Each has a specific ministry on behalf of humankind, but They are One. Jesus said it plainly, “And the glory which You [Father] gave Me [Jesus] I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one” (John 17:22, 23).

In the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah wrote a prophecy regarding

Jesus' future ministry on this earth that states these words:

“Come near to Me, hear this:
I have not spoken in secret from the beginning;
From the time that it was, I was there.
And now the Lord GOD and His Spirit
Have sent Me” (Isaiah 48:16).

In this verse, we see references to Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Father.

We also see all Three—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—present in the preparation for Jesus' birth on the earth. “The angel answered and said to her [Mary]: ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest [God the Father] will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One [Jesus] who is to be born will be called the Son of God’ ” (Luke 1:35).

We see evidence of the Godhead in Jesus' command: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18–20).

We see a succinct summary of these Scripture verses in the book *Evangelism*: “There are three living persons of the heavenly trio; in the name of these three great powers—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—those who receive Christ by living faith are baptized, and these powers will co-operate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ.”¹

Why is having the Holy Spirit in our lives so important?

Jesus said the Holy Spirit would do the following in the life of every Christian—that means *you!*

- “Teach you all things” (John 14:26).
- “Bring to your remembrance” what Jesus said (verse 26).
- “Convict the world [you and me] of sin [wrong living]” (John 16:8).
- “Convict the world . . . of righteousness [right living]” (verse 8).
- “Convict the world . . . of judgment [being ready to meet Jesus]” (verse 8).

- “Guide you into all truth” (verse 13).
- Speak on Jesus’ authority by speaking what “He hears” (verse 13).
- “Tell you things to come” (verse 13).
- “Glorify” Jesus (verse 14).
- Talk about Jesus (verses 14, 15).

In fact, the Holy Spirit is so important in the life of the Christian that Jesus told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for a special outpouring of the promised Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4, 5). Jesus explained the importance of waiting in verse 8: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

What did Jesus say the Holy Spirit would do for Christians? He would give them “power.” In the New Testament, the Greek word for “power” is *dunamis*. It is the root of the English word *dynamite*! The Holy Spirit is so powerful in the life of the Christian that He is a *must-have*, not a maybe or an either-or. The presence of the Holy Spirit is as essential to the life of the Christian as blood is to the heart or water to a fish.

Truthfully, you cannot be a dynamic, growing Christian without the Holy Spirit living within you. “The Holy Spirit did for them [Jesus’ disciples] that which they could not have accomplished for themselves in a lifetime.”²

Let’s pause for a minute and let this statement sink into our minds. The Holy Spirit filling each disciple was *instantly more powerful* in their lives than anything they could ever do for themselves in an entire *lifetime*! No wonder Ellen White wrote the following to her fellow Christians in the year 1911:

If all were willing, all would be filled with the Spirit. Wherever the need of the Holy Spirit is a matter little thought of, there is seen spiritual drought, spiritual darkness, spiritual declension and death. Whenever minor matters occupy the attention, the divine power which is necessary for the growth and prosperity of the church, and which would bring all other blessings in its train, is lacking, though offered in infinite plenitude.

Since this is the means by which we are to receive power, why

do we not hunger and thirst for the gift of the Spirit? Why do we not talk of it, pray for it, and preach concerning it? The Lord is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who serve Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children. For the daily baptism of the Spirit every worker should offer his petition to God. Companies of Christian workers should gather to ask for special help, for heavenly wisdom, that they may know how to plan and execute wisely. Especially should they pray that God will baptize His chosen ambassadors in mission fields with a rich measure of His Spirit.³

It was December. Christmas lights sparkled above the wrapped gifts under the tree. The flames in the fireplace reflected on the pages of my son's toy catalog. Jimmy stared once again at the picture of a Skystriker model jet. It was the number-one item on my son's Christmas list! He talked about it at breakfast, lunch, and supper. He just had to have that airplane! As parents, our hearts' desire was to give him this airplane for Christmas. However, every store in our city and surrounding towns was out of stock. No Skystriker was available!

Jimmy talked nonstop about this airplane. His mother and I were troubled; where could we find one and make his dream come true? I called stores all over the state. Finally, I found a store that had the toy—in the city where Jimmy's grandparents lived—more than three hundred miles away. I gave the clerk my credit card information and asked her to hold the airplane. She gave me twenty-four hours to pick it up, or it would go back on the shelf.

I quickly called Jimmy's grandparents, and they hurried to the store and picked up the toy. We were joyous! Jimmy would not be disappointed on Christmas morning! Jesus says that God is more eager to give us the Holy Spirit than we are to give good gifts to our children. He is even more desirous of filling you and me with the Holy Spirit than I was in searching cities all over the state for Jimmy's airplane! As a parent, you know how much you want to keep your children from being disappointed. You want to give them gifts and fun surprises that make them bubble over with happiness. Your heavenly Parent wants the same for you—even more than you can imagine!

Let's go back to the jungle village. Upon arriving in the village, I

worked diligently to get settled in my room in the village chief's home. My roommate, a pastor friend, and I were going to preach a reaping seminar and teach a group of pastors about pastoral, evangelistic ministry. We worked tirelessly, along with the rest of our team, getting ready for the opening night of the meetings. In fact, we worked so hard and long that I was doing what I call "praying on the run": talking to God nonstop all day in the midst of my activities but not pausing on my knees very long to have a heart-to-heart conversation. Now, we should pray on the run, but that should not be the only way we pray each day.

On the opening night of the meetings, I quickly changed into my preaching shirt, prayed, and preached. Did the meeting go OK? Yes. Was the pavilion full of people? Yes. Did the children's meeting go superbly? Yes. Was God present? Yes. But as I walked the dirt pathway back to my room, I knew something was missing. And as I wandered across the roadway (learning later to watch for snakes), my mind grasped this truth: What was missing in my life that night was the heart-to-heart, peaceful, relaxing assurance of the power of the Spirit that comes by slowing down and taking quiet, private time to let Almighty God prepare me for that moment. I had been so busy, praying continually on the go. But I needed to stop and let the peace and power of God rest upon me.

You see, the important thing was not my sermon notes. It was not whether the images showed up perfectly on the screen. Now, some of those details are important; you want the equipment to work. But you see, the meeting was not about me at all!

The questions I should have been asking myself were these: *Have I stayed on my knees today until I know God is finished talking to me? Have I stayed on my knees long enough today, asking God to convict hearts? Asking Him to send the Holy Spirit into the life of every person in the village? Asking Him to use me to speak in the power of the Spirit, not because of my worth but because of His worth? Have I stayed on my knees long enough to be truly emptied of self—self-thoughts and self-concerns—thinking about God and what He is going to do in the lives of the villagers if I will simply get out of His way?*

How is this accomplished? Through the working of the Holy Spirit.

Remember the statement we just read: "The Holy Spirit did for them [the disciples of Jesus] that which they could not have accomplished for themselves in a lifetime."⁴ I want this experience in my life, don't you?

I know you do. Your heart yearns as my heart yearns. When you and I grasp this concept, breathe this concept, and live this concept, we will be so close to Jesus that we will be as a songwriter wrote:

Be like Jesus, this my song,
In the home and in the throng;
Be like Jesus, all day long!
I would be like Jesus.⁵

Together, let's discover how to be Holy Spirit-filled followers of Jesus. *My prayer for you is that this study of the Holy Spirit, as seen through the life of Elijah, will change you into a new woman or new man of God for His glory.*

REFLECTION

1. Has God performed a miracle in your life? If so, write it down, and share it with your small group.

Have you ever encountered an angel who was involved in a specific situation in your life? If so, please share your experience.

2. "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Luke 11:13). When you read this verse, what does it mean to you?

- God wants to give the Holy Spirit to every person He creates.
- If you do not ask for the Holy Spirit, you will not receive the Spirit in your life.
- I am thankful that God has me in His heart and mind.
- Other _____

3. If you could ask God to do something spiritually significant in your life, what would you ask?

4. If you do not have a yearning for the Holy Spirit, what can you do to have a heart for God?

For more help, read the following verses:

- John 6:44. Ask God to help you draw close to Him.
 - 1 John 1:9. Confess your sins and need of Him.
 - John 14:25, 26. Ask God for the Holy Spirit to fill your life.
5. “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:16–18). When you read these words, which part speaks to you the most? Why?

1. Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald®, 1946), 615.
 2. Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press®, 1911), 39, 40.
 3. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 50, 51.
 4. White, 39, 40.
 5. James Rowe, “I Would Be Like Jesus” (1912), in *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald®, 1985), no. 311.