

# COME HOLY SPIRIT



**CAROLYN C. MOORE**

# SEEDBED SHORTS

*Kingdom Treasure for Your Reading Pleasure*

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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Carolyn Moore, an evangelist, author church planter, and disciple-maker, is the founding pastor of Mosaic United Methodist Church in Augusta, Georgia. She is an ordained elder in the North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church and received a Master of Divinity degree from Asbury Theological Seminary. Carolyn is passionate about telling the story of Jesus Christ

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## ABOUT THE ENCOUNTER SERIES

The Encounter Series by Carolyn Moore consists of three separate eight-week Bible studies and videos that teach and encourage a daily walk with the Trinity.

The first of the series, Encounter Jesus, explores eight passages from across the four gospels, each highlighting a key facet of Jesus's life and work. Encounter the Spirit continues the series as Moore explores the person and work of the Holy Spirit. When we were filming this study, we inexplicably lost one of the video sessions not once, but twice. If you ask us, that's indicative of something the enemy doesn't want to see in the hands of the people of God. The final study, Encounter the Father, will be released in late 2015.

Each of the studies from the Encounter Series is an outstanding resource for personal, small group, or church-wide use.

# Contents

1. When God Moves, We Move	6
2. The Rocks, the Ripples, and the River	10
3. The Marks of a Spirit-Filled Life	14
4. Claiming Our Inheritance	19
Notes	23

# CHAPTER 1

## When God Moves, We Move

**I**n the final verses of Exodus, of all places, we find the first hints of Pentecost. The people have just pulled together all of their resources to build a tabernacle for the Lord. They have detailed instructions for crafting this most holy of places, which would become a sign of God's presence among them. The tabernacle would also be their launching pad, a place from which they would move out of the desert and into the promised land.

When this tabernacle was complete, the final verses of Exodus tell us that “the cloud covered the Tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. . . . Now whenever the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out on their journey, following it. But if the cloud did not rise, they remained where they were until it lifted (Exod. 40:34, 36–37).

Depending on the translation, the word for “tabernacle” can mean a place to meet or a place that moves. That tells us that from the very beginning there has always been a relationship between the presence of God and the journey of faith. It also teaches us that God never meant for his tabernacle to get stuck in one place. It was built to move when God moves, always in the direction of his promises.

That scene from Exodus is our backdrop for Pentecost. The book of Acts begins with the resurrected Jesus telling his followers, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). What God did first with the tabernacle in Exodus, he is about to do with all believers, placing the laws and commandments of Moses into the person of Jesus Christ. Those who receive Christ into their hearts become God’s tabernacle. On that first Pentecost, this plan was confirmed with cloud and fire, just as with the Exodus tabernacle. And just like the first tabernacle, when he moves, we are invited to move with him.

Movement has been in the church's DNA from the beginning. The kingdom of God is designed to move. It goes where God goes. He has no desire to make us comfortable out there in the desert. Nor does he intend to leave us to fend for ourselves.

Acts 1:8 promises power. "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you"—the same power the Israelites had who fought with enemies twice their size and won, who found food enough to feed hundreds of thousands of people, who received miracle after miracle of God's provision. The power they had, we now have. When we accept the Holy Spirit into our lives we are no longer victims but people with power to move out of our bad circumstances and into better ones.

Of course, in Exodus, it was not a person but a community that built the tabernacle and moved out of bondage and toward the promises of God. In Nehemiah, it was a community that rebuilt the temple and restored the wall. In Acts, it was a community that received the Holy Spirit, then flowed out into the streets building that community from a couple-dozen to a few thousand in one day.



Clearly, the filling of the Holy Spirit is not first of all an individual, emotional experience but something given to the community to strengthen and empower us for the work of the kingdom. Paul asks the Corinthians, “Don’t you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you?” (1 Cor. 3:16). He says to the Ephesians, “Together, we are his house . . . carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord” (Eph. 2:20–21).

The tabernacle is where God meets us and how we know when to move. As William Temple says, no one who is filled with the Spirit of God can keep that Spirit to himself. “Where the Spirit is, he flows forth. And where there is no flowing forth, he is not there.”<sup>1</sup>

Is there a flowing forth in your life? Are you going someplace spiritually? Are you closer to God’s promises for your life than you were a year ago? Five years ago? Or are you still out there in the desert of indecision, waiting for one more sign?

Meanwhile, God is calling us forward and his design for his children is not to make us comfortable, but to make us great. May you be filled with the Holy Spirit and placed in the path of his promises.

## CHAPTER 2

# The Rocks, the Ripples, and the River

She was not a fence-sitter. This was someone who knew how to make things happen. A solid church leader steeped in safe theology and good manners.

And then, the Holy Spirit got a hold of her.

It happened when leaders of our church began to wrestle with how their own spiritual health might be affecting the community. We were learning new things about the connection between emotional and spiritual health and she was particularly impacted. Seeing how her emotional maturity could impact (for better or worse) not just her spiritual life, but the progress of others sent her on a journey that both awakened and unnerved her.

Because she was the kind of leader who didn't back down from a challenge, she got honest with God and with herself. She diagnosed herself with "doing

sickness.” She could make things happen, but was all that activity Spirit-led? The cure meant submitting to the Holy Spirit’s work in her life, but that was scary. What if this change disappointed those who had come to depend on her ability to “do”?

One day she marched into my office and with both frustration and surrender in her expression, asked, “Will you be okay with me if I come to the end of this and am a different person?” I thought it was a profound question. After all, she’d been central to some progress we were making as a church. She was doing big things with small groups, developing teams, and shaking up our approach to newcomers. I loved her ability to “do.”

But now that the Holy Spirit had gotten a hold of her, well . . . what if she changed? And what if those changes led her out of the work she was doing and into places we couldn’t predict? What if the Holy Spirit convinced her to be still? Would she still be needed? Would we still like her?

It was as if she were standing by a pool holding a rock, her hand hovering over the water. The rock was a crisis of belief that moved her to the threshold of transformation. At this stage, she found herself asking, “What has to change in my life if I am going

to go with God?” Because here’s the thing. Once that rock hits the water, ripples happen, and we don’t get to control the ripples. This decision to be led by the Spirit is a choice to release control.

This is what it means to be sanctified. Sanctification is about allowing the Holy Spirit to lead as he flows through us, energizing our journey with Jesus. When we submit to being filled, we become part of a movement that cannot be contained and it begins with the questions, “What has to change if I am going to go with God? Am I even willing to let change happen? And if I change, will I be okay with that? Will the people around me be okay with it? Will I be okay with it even if they aren’t?”

Sanctification is messy! In our community of faith, we are discovering that we get to control almost nothing in this process. We are being led places we didn’t think we wanted to go. We find ourselves building arks under sunny skies, trusting in what we don’t yet see.

But sanctification is also joyful. As it turns out, I not only like that leader who has allowed the Holy Spirit more access to her life, I like her more. She is still doing great things among our people, but I’m noticing that now her activity comes from a different

motivation, a more peaceful and impassioned place. She is slowly but surely being released from the tyranny of “shoulds” and “oughts” and there is a great joy in that release.

Sanctification brings freedom. Freedom from “doing sickness.” Freedom from “pleasing others sickness.” Freedom from the need to air-brush our lives into some socially accepted image. The Spirit-led life offers such freedom to live headlong into the values of God, to create ripples and flow in his river.

I am convinced this flow into the Spirit-led life is the difference between going to church and going with God. After all, it is one thing to believe. That we can control and even choose to keep to ourselves. But it is only as our rocks hit the water, as we choose transformation and let the ripples happen, that our stories begin to flow into God’s story.

What needs to change in your life if you are going to go with God?



## CHAPTER 3

# The Marks of a Spirit-Filled Life

*You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. . . . For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.*

—Romans 8:9, 14 NIV

Said George: “You know we are on a wrong track altogether. We must not think of the things we could do with, but only of the things that we can’t do without.”<sup>2</sup>

To understand Paul’s take on the Holy Spirit, we first need a lesson in filters. In your car, an air-intake system feeds the engine’s compressors. That system takes in both air and everything floating in it—pollen, bugs, dirt, everything. That’s why we need an air filter. It prevents all those fragments from clogging the engine.

What works for car engines works for spiritual engines, too. We also have an intake system, complete with filters that decide what we take in and what we filter out. For instance, if I believe in reincarnation, then my experience of the natural world will filter through that belief. Childhood wounds will filter adult conversations and relationships. Our filters determine what gets to our engines.

This is why Paul makes such a strong case for the Spirit-filtered life as he describes the marks of this life in Romans 8. This is the shape of a life controlled by (filtered by) the Spirit of God.

**1. We begin to think more of God than ourselves.**

It doesn't happen overnight, but over time our worldview changes. We begin to see a bigger picture. We filter more and more of our decisions through God's values and God's desires. Our choices take on a less selfish, more kingdom-minded quality.

**2. We will still experience the limits of sin.**

That's what makes the life-changing message of forgiveness just as important for a Spirit-filled person as it does for one who just got saved. Spirit-filtered people value the practices of confession and

repentance because they keep our spiritual engines running smoothly. We take time daily to pray with Paul for the Lord to fill us with his Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). Spirit-filled people are not perfectionists, but we energetically pursue the practice of perfect love—the ultimate mark of the Holy Spirit.

### **3. We experience life on God's terms.**

I once heard a personal trainer tell her new client during their first workout together, “You are now a person with a routine.” I like that. Spirit-filtered people are people with a spiritual routine. We experience life on God's terms and our calendars and checkbooks are filtered through the pleasures of God.

### **4. God will do the same thing in us that he did in Jesus.**

Jesus said we would receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on us (Acts 1:8), and that we'd do the things he did and more (John 14:12). Under the authority of the Holy Spirit, we have power to cast out demons, cure diseases, preach the gospel, and heal the sick (Luke 9:1). Spirit-filtered people take that authority seriously.

## **5. We are delivered from the dead life and into son/daughter status.**

Because he lives, we live. A Spirit-filtered person does not interpret his experiences through the lens of death and rejection, but through life and acceptance. After all, Jesus didn't come to make bad people good; he came to make dead people live.

## **6. Our body will be as alive as Christ's.**

Everything we believe—our entire worldview as followers of Jesus—depends on the fact of Jesus being in the presence of God in the flesh on our behalf right now. Our flesh in heaven is a sure pledge that God is at peace with all who believe. And God's Spirit in us is our assurance of his plan to give us access to all the powers of Heaven. We are as alive as Christ, right now, in the spiritual realm.

Where these marks are present in a follower of Jesus, life is different. We begin to see financial strain not as a roadblock but as a miracle in the making. Mistakes no longer define us because they have been filtered through forgiveness. Our stories of shame and guilt become a testament to grace. Brokenness becomes a pathway to peace. Death is a doorway to glory.

The Spirit-filtered life is characterized by an other-worldly perspective. This leaves us with a burning question: Does my life reflect that perspective? What filters the things that flow into my spiritual engine? How do I interpret my experiences—as one bound by the spirits of this dark world, or as one led by the Spirit of God?

May you experience the pure joy and deep peace of a life filtered by the Holy Spirit.



## CHAPTER 4

# Claiming Our Inheritance

**C**ontrary to what is so often implied, the Holy Spirit is not a course in advanced Christianity. He is not reserved for the few, the deep, the weird. From the moment we come to Jesus, the Holy Spirit is our seal and inheritance. In his word to the Ephesian church, Paul instructs, “In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance . . .” (Eph. 1:13–14 ESV).

To access the power and fullness of the Holy Spirit, however, is a choice. I think of it sort of like my computer. This little guy can do a lot. My computer can take stock of what’s in my pantry and formulate a meal for dinner. It can manage my finances, synchronize family calendars, and keep track of my

caloric intake. Everything I need to organize my life is in the twelve-by-fifteen inches of metal I call a computer.

So what do I use it for? Beyond surfing the net, I do little other than type words. For me, a computer is simply a glorified typewriter. All the potential goes unused for my lack of knowledge and interest in doing more.

I suspect many who believe in Jesus have that same brand of relationship with the Holy Spirit. For all the power and potential offered us at salvation, we settle for the spiritual equivalent of word processing. And maybe that's because (like me with my computer) we just don't know how this thing works.

Paul got a whiff of this when he met up with a group in Ephesus who were taught repentance by Apollos. He suspected a disconnect with the whole gospel. "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" he asked them. 'No,' they replied, 'we haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.'" (Acts 19:2-3).

Having embraced only the repentance half of the equation, they'd missed the full gospel. And they weren't the last to make this mistake. How many good people who go to church and call themselves

Christians have no clue about the Holy Spirit? How many are sitting in church weekly with the hope that they've been saved from Hell but no clue they've also been saved for joy?

I've been following the life of a new believer this year as he finally laid down an addiction to alcohol. Now in his fifties, he had his first drink when he was eight. His entire adult life he's chased after a spiritual solution to his problems with a bottle in his hand. He dropped in and out of churches, never finding peace because he'd only managed to hear half the gospel.

This year, two things changed for him. First, he finally completed the act of repentance by laying down his drinking habit. Then, he got filled with the Holy Spirit. I got a text from him recently, 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."

That's the result of walking in the Spirit. It is about moving beyond victim status to the place where we experience joy.

"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" It is a great question.

My friend did one other thing that seems crucial to the process. He got into a group. Interesting that we

find this same pattern in the folks Paul encountered in Ephesus. For two years, he met regularly with that small group of Spirit-filled believers. By meeting together for mutual encouragement and training in the Word, the story says that little group managed to touch an entire community. As we have said before, when we submit to being filled, we become part of a movement that cannot be contained.

I'm reminded again of my computer. On the outside it doesn't look like much but inside there is a veritable feast of potential. In the same way, that initial encounter with the Holy Spirit—though sometimes dramatic—can often look like not much of anything. But Paul's promise is that beneath the surface, God is at work growing the kingdom in us, growing the joy, creating ripples.

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 you are in a drought of joy these days, is it possible you are trying to do religion without walking in the Spirit?

May you find deep peace and real joy as you live the gospel and walk in the Spirit.

# Notes

1. William Temple, *Readings in John's Gospel*, quoted in John R. W. Stott, "Keeping the Right Company," *Preaching Today*, Tape No. 46, <http://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/1998/july/3838.html>

2. Jerome K. Jerome, *Three Men in a Boat (To Say Nothing of the Dog)*, (United Kingdom: Victorian Secrets, 1889). Reprint, Victorian Secrets, 2012. Kindle edition.





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