

# Knowing Christ, The Holy Spirit, Experiential Christianity (Q&A)

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**Michael:** Next question I would assume has to do a little bit with what you were talking about before, Mack. And the question is: How should we deal with a hunger for God so deep that it brings us to despair, to the point of actually preferring death?

**Mack:** Strange question, but important. The first thing that comes to my mind is that might be an imbalanced desire. There's one thing between longing to depart and be with Christ, but not having an impatient, imbalanced zeal that you become fixated somehow. And so, I don't know exactly, I think there's just an imbalance I think in that question that reflects maybe immaturity or a zeal that's not according to wisdom and knowledge. Because every Christian, like Paul, he said I long to depart and be with Christ which is far better, but I believe I'm going to remain here. And it's better for you - meaning the churches - that I stay. And so, we should be ready to go be with the Lord. We shouldn't plan a trip to go soon by our choosing. And our desire to be with the Lord won't wrongly affect our current devotion and service to live for Christ as long as He has us here.

**Michael:** Would anyone like to add anything else?

**Tim:** Mack at least twice quoted from the Song of Solomon in his sermon. "Draw us and we will run after You." And you know, right before that in the Song of Solomon, it says: let Him kiss me with His kisses. (incomplete thought) And you know what? There's times in our lives when we feel like that. There's this ache. Let Him kiss me. We want intimacy. There's a desperation. There is a deep longing. And other times, we have to admit, Lord, draw us and we will run after You. Because there's almost a sense of the cooling off that was talked about. And if you're going to ask me which one I would rather have, I'd rather be in that first category. (incomplete thought) Have you ever been there? Have you lived the Christian life long enough where you've gone through these fluctuations and you're on the mountaintop and you're just pleading with the Lord: please, don't let me go back down in the valley. Don't let me cool off. There are times He visits our soul. Whoever is writing that if that's what you feel, if that's genuine, if God has put an ache, I would just say, look, if you go to pray and you're coming away and you haven't been satisfied and the ache is all the more, go back and pray again. If you feel like you can't get as close as you want to, get as close as you can. I would do nothing to diminish that. I would do nothing to quench that. Because the truth is that if you live the Christian life long enough you're going to know that you get into seasons where that isn't the case.

**Mack:** Luke 1 - Mary's Magnificat. He fills the hungry with good things. And then blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be filled. When there's acute spiritual longing, God will satisfy it regularly.

**Michael:** Maybe just to see what you guys think of this as well. From what it seems like from a question like this that I think someone might have mentioned it in one of the sermons, but the Christian life ought to be deeply experiential. Would you then agree with that as well? It's much more than just knowing, but a desire to know and experience a living God?

**Don:** Yes, cerebral Christianity is a threat to what I believe to be experiential spirituality. I'm all for scholarship, please don't misunderstand me. But if it's just exclusively scholarship to the point that it puffs up and then begins to grate against our desires for walking with Christ and entering into a sweeter fellowship with Him, then to me, that's where I draw the line. But I really, as I said in one of the previous messages, I want to know truth in such a way that it makes my heart dance before the Lord and under the sweetness of Christ's presence.

**Mack:** Experiential Christianity has to do with experiencing God both biblically and in a transcendent way, in an existential way. And it all has to do with a right view of the Holy Spirit and a right relationship with Him particularly. We can't neglect the Holy Spirit because He's the One that lets us experience Christ. He does all the work of sanctification in us. He's the One that illuminates the Word, that empowers witness. So our relationship is very uniquely special with the Holy Spirit. And that's where Christian experience comes from.

**Michael:** You had mentioned in your sermon that we ought to have communion with the Person of the Spirit. Is there any more that you could elaborate on how that might look practically in the Christian life? You mentioned a little bit about waking up in the morning and expecting to be in fellowship with the Spirit throughout the day. How would that look throughout the Christian life, for example, as a person might go and go to work, or loving their wives, loving their children, being faithful in college, in the universities or in high school. How might that flesh out to be in fellowship with the Spirit in those contexts?

**Mack:** Well, it's a big question. Paul prayed at the end of 2 Corinthians 13, the last verse, this benedictory prayer: "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God (implied: the Father), and the communion (or fellowship) of the Holy Spirit be with you all." So there's this Trinitarian communion. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ - because He's our Mediator. We only get anything from God through Him. The love of God the Father. The love of God is the whole source and fountain of redemption. And the love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Spirit. But communion with the Spirit, I think it just has to do with we make sure we realize the Holy Spirit is a Person just like the Father and the Son. He is not a force, a power, an energy. He's as equally a Person. And we have relationship with Him. He's in us. He's with us. We can talk to Him. We can commune with Him. We can ask His wisdom. But we don't really view Him that way consciously enough.

I remember I met a guy one time just in passing. He knew I was a Christian. He started saying: You know, I just can't quit smoking. I do love the Lord, but I can't stop. What can I do? And I wasn't going to be with him but five minutes. I didn't know what to say. I said, well, you know, I

could preach to him the law. But this thought came to me. I looked at him and I said, well, if you're going to suck smoke in your lungs, why don't you ask the Holy Spirit which brand He likes? Winston's? Or Marlboro's? Because you say the Spirit of God dwells in you. You're the temple of the Holy Spirit. So why don't you ask Him? And he just got big-eyed. He knew what I meant. Because he wasn't viewing God with him and in him. And we've got to view the Lord with us and in us. So, we've got to welcome Him. We've got to daily, consciously seek to yield to His control. That's what Ephesians 5:18 means. Be always being filled; under His control. We've got to pray for Him to be more on our lives. Luke 11:13. "How much more..." And we've got to be free to pray to Him. We can pray to the Father and the Son and the Spirit.

Spurgeon, when he would, you may have heard when he would come up to the pulpit, he would go up the steps on the way to preach, and he was saying to himself, "I believe in the Holy Ghost. I believe in the Holy Ghost." He would say that as he would go up to preach. And so, even pastors and preachers, the last thing we ought to do before getting up to preach - we ought to ask for more of the Holy Spirit. We should preach in conscious dependence on Him. So we get this view from looking closely at what does the New Testament say about the believer's relationship with the Spirit. And we're not to quench Him. We're not to grieve Him. We're not to resist Him. We're to stay under His control. We're to be full of His power. We cultivate the relationship. And it's a growth process.

**Don:** Well, a prelude for personal revival to me is waking up to the reality of the Spirit that lives in you. I mean, we have no idea just how intertwined His offices, His influences, impressions are on us and we need to respect that accordingly. To me, that provides the very foundation for a life of living in the Spirit.

**Tim:** It seems that I just think of words like revelation in the knowledge of Him. If you think about, Paul would just exclaim: Oh, that I might know Him! Now, I know he's talking specifically about Christ, but even what eternal life is. And it is interesting, the Spirit of God is left out right there, but eternal life has to do with knowing the Father, knowing the Son. But the Spirit isn't excluded in that. And if we're going to know the Spirit, we have to study the Spirit. If we're going to interact with the Spirit, if we're going to know I guess the realities of communion with Him, we have to know Who it is we're communing with. I think that incredibly helps our interaction when we know what it is that He does. What does the Spirit do? I mean, throw some things at me. I know we're the Q&A people, but you tell me. What does the Spirit do? Gives us strength. Gives us faith. Do you have a text? (unintelligible)

**(from the audience)** The Holy Spirit is the presence of God. When we receive salvation, the Holy Spirit seals...

**Tim:** Okay, seals. Do you have a text?

**(from the audience)** ...seals your relationship with God. And also as you're walking along the way, you're seeking something. You don't know which way to go. (unintelligible)

**Tim:** So the Spirit leads. But let's stay really focused here. Just throw some things at me that the Spirit does or that the Spirit is in Scripture. He seals us. He leads us. Sealing is talked about in Ephesians 1. The Spirit leading us is spoken about in Romans 8. What else does the Spirit do? (unintelligible) He teaches us. He speaks to us. And you know one of the things He speaks is that we're children of God. He bears witness with our spirit. He also helps us to pray when we don't know how to pray. And there's groanings that take place.

There later in Ephesians, there's the unity of the Spirit. We definitely have a passage that speaks about the grieving of the Spirit. Isn't it interesting? Do you find it marvelous somehow that when you sin against the Holy Spirit, there is a sin against the Holy Spirit that cannot be forgiven? But all sins against the Son can be forgiven. Have you ever just sat back and said what is this? How can that be? The Spirit is the One Who is resisted. The Spirit is the One Who is enraged even when we trample upon the blood of Christ. The Spirit of God is almost like it's that aspect of God that is sensitive and personal. You think about grieving the Spirit. We grieve. That's the sense of sorrow. It is as though the Spirit of God is the One that comes down and touches us with the feelings of God. And you begin to study Who He is in Scripture. Just knowing that He is the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. You know that He carried along the writers of this Book. He knows exactly what everything in there means. He's the One Who inspired these men. (Incomplete thought) Mack is talking about waking up in the morning, but you know when you open your Bibles praying to the Spirit, "Show me what's in this Book," do you know one of the things that the Spirit has come to do? Glorify Christ. Didn't He say that? He's not going to speak of His own things. He said, "He glorifies Me." Don't we sing the song? "Show us Christ." Who are you talking to when you sing that? It's the Spirit. And you see, once we start understanding those things, then our relationship with Him starts to become more refined, more real, how He interacts in our life.

**Michael:** Anyone have anything else to add?