

IHOP Postmortem Part 3, The Holy Spirit is for Service

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. . . . the errors within the New Apostolic Reformation and what we might generally call hyper-charismatic movement, I used some of the errors going on there to illustrate what the Bible actually teaches about the nature and role of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life. And we've covered a few things.

First of all, we've discussed apostolic uniqueness, saying that the Holy Spirit did work uniquely through the apostles. They had a unique qualification to have been witnesses to the resurrected Christ and also to have been writers of Scripture. And so there was a unique role that the Holy Spirit played there. The sermon on John 16 touched on what I think is the most important distinction, and that is simply that the Holy Spirit's main work, both in converting the lost and in sanctifying the saved, is to show Christ and to show Christ specifically through the Scriptures. So one of the big problems I have with the New Apostolic Reformation is an approach to Scripture that is not actually Christ-centered.

One of the things I would be so eager if I could install a discernment chip in every Christian, kind of like the Matrix, you know, where Neo is like, I know Kung Fu.

[2 : 2 8] I wish that we could upload a discernment chip into all Christians so that they would know a little bit more about whether or not a ministry is indeed Christ-centered and Scripture-centered.

One of the things that seems to be deceptive, and I don't blame Christians exactly for this, is that we tend to be satisfied if a preacher mentions the Bible, if he quotes the Bible, if the Bible is included in his talk. And we don't tend to be overly picky about asking, generally, as Christians, does the text actually support what you just said? Is the text actually saying what you just said? And so forth. And that's one of the benefits of having the congregation we have at Providence. I know that there have been moments where, as I did the work of exposition on a text, I wound up thinking, this would pass in a lot of churches, but it's not going to pass in my church.

My church is going to say, well, Chris, that's not actually what the text says. And so having a somewhat theologically educated congregation is good for the accountability of the preacher, because it forces him to make sure that he's actually not just using the Bible, but submitting to it.

One example I would use, and I think this can be helpful to just general Christians out there thinking through, like, well, you know, how did I get deceived into this IHOP thing, and, you know, into why did I buy in initially to the New Apostolic Reformation, and so forth? One of the things we know about if you own a dog, you'll know that they don't take medicine, you know, by itself, typically.

Dogs will typically not swallow a pill, but if you wrap the pill in a hamburger, then, you know, the dog will swallow the pill. And I think that people need to understand that a lot of preaching that happens in the modern Western church, not just the Western church, is essentially what's going on there, is the Bible is being used to wrap around the speaker's ideas. And the Christians are swallowing, really, the speaker's ideas. The Bible is just a sort of a way to deceive. The presence or use of the Bible is simply a way for a non-discerning Christian to think he's getting biblical teaching when he's really not. He's getting something else. And that's a big concern that I have, not just for the New Apostolic Reformation, but just for churches in general. I think a lot of Christians think they're in churches that are founded on the Word, but it's actually a bit of a sleight of hand that's happening there. And it's not always intentional, because I know some guys in that movement who probably are sincere, lower-ranking guys that you would never have heard of, they're sincere, but they've learned how to use the Bible in a way that isn't actually exegesis, it's eisegesis. And that's a good way of...people sometimes wonder, well, what is eisegesis and exegesis? Well, eisegesis just means putting your ideas into the text, and exegesis just means looking at the text and asking, what does it say? And so I do think that there was a lot of that kind of teaching in IHOP, and I think there's a lot of that kind of teaching just in the Church in general, where it sounds like the Bible's being used, and it technically is being used, but it's really being used more to wrap an individual's ideas. Okay, one of the main things the Bible teaches that we haven't gotten to yet, related to the Holy Spirit, is that the Holy Spirit is power for service.

[6 : 35] The Holy Spirit is power for service. The New Apostolic Reformation hypercharismatic types think that the Holy Spirit is mostly power for sensations. It's a very sensual, senses-oriented religion. And when I say that it's sensual, I don't mean that it's all sexual. It's bigger than that.

Sensuality is really sort of the precursor of, say, Eastern Orthodoxy as well. It's this idea that your senses are being tickled, and they would talk about a sense of reverence or a sense of awe or a sense of mystic kind of mysticism. This would be all in the category of seeing the Holy Spirit's main purpose as being sensations, to make you feel certain things. But in reality, the Holy Spirit is presented in Scripture quite clearly as power, not for your sensations, but power for service.

For instance, the Holy Spirit is the power that helps us to love one another. It's no accident that in the farewell discourse, we see Jesus's consistent commands to love one another intermingled with promises related to the Holy Spirit and the coming of the Holy Spirit. In John 13, 34 through 35, Jesus says, A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. In John 15, 12 through 13, Jesus says, This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. And both of these commands are intermingled with the promises of the Holy Spirit's empowerment. That's one of the main ideas that comes through in Scripture, is that the Holy Spirit turns a person into a kind of life source in the world. The Holy Spirit turns a person into a kind of life source for the rest of the world. At the end of John 7, Jesus cries out,

If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were yet to receive. For as yet the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. So a person who has the Holy Spirit is a spring of living water, has a spring of living water inside of himself, and he becomes a kind of watering hole for a thirsty world. That living water that's flowing out of him doesn't only satisfy his thirst, but the person who has the Holy Spirit also becomes a kind of life source, a watering hole for a thirsty world. You know, when we look at Galatians 5, we see that the Holy Spirit turns a person into a kind of spiritual orchard of virtues. Galatians 5, 22-23, But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, faithfulness, self-control against such things there is no law. And right before then, the word but starts there in Galatians 5, 22, but the fruit of the Spirit is. Well, right before then, Paul lists the fruit of the flesh, and the fruit of the flesh is all the stuff that ruins relationships, including sexual usury, anger, and so forth. And so what you see the Holy Spirit doing there is turning people into relationship breakers, into relationship blessers. A person with the Holy Spirit has got a living spring inside of him, and he becomes a kind of watering hole. A person with the Holy Spirit has the fruit of the Spirit, and he becomes a kind of orchard so that people can taste and see that the Lord is good. And the idea is that when people you interact with, if you have the Holy Spirit, should be refreshed and encouraged and challenged. They will taste and see that the Lord is good. The Holy Spirit makes a person hopeful and happy and helpful, most of all. Another place you can see this dynamic that the Holy Spirit is for service is in Paul's discussion of the Spirit and spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 through 14.

[11:00] The church in Corinth was misusing the gifts of the Holy Spirit. How did Paul redirect them? Like, what were they doing wrong? Well, that's the purpose of 1 Corinthians 13 and the discussion of love, and then in 14, how the gifts that you use ought to be edifying to the body. It's power for service.

It would be great if you could literally tie everything you think you know about the Holy Spirit back to this overarching purpose of loving service. That is exactly the way that the Bible talks about the Spirit. The Holy Spirit empowers generosity. It's a generosity rooted in love, and that's why, for instance, when you see the first deacons appointed in Acts 6, the Holy Spirit, that the men must be full of the Spirit, it says. That's because they need the power to serve lovingly. So you need to stop thinking so much about the Holy Spirit as something happening to you, and rather start thinking of the Holy Spirit as something that's happening through you. And this is the hypercharismatic flaw.

It's a self-centered view, a sensual view of the Spirit, a sensation view of the Spirit. Was IHOP so broken because it was in particular full of sexual sin? Well, that wasn't just the issue with one guy. That was systemic. There was sexual sin all over that particular movement, but I would argue that that's simply because their larger framework for the Spirit was self-serving.

It was sensual in nature. It was sensation-based. The leaders should have been serving the sheep, but instead they sexualized them. And I don't know, honestly, which came first. Was their misunderstanding of the Holy Spirit what led them to being sexual users of their sheep? Or was... I don't know. I don't know exactly, but the two things do exist together. A wrong view of the Holy Spirit, also a wrong view of how to relate to others. That's a massive concern that I have as you're thinking about the Holy Spirit, that you understand not mostly the Holy Spirit's not mostly to give you feelings. The Holy Spirit's mostly to help you, to give you faith, to serve, and to be a source of love, and to be a source of self-sacrificial kindness and care and truth-speaking and so on and so forth.

