

EXCERPT



Renewing Communication *Spirit-Shaped Approaches for Children, Youth, and Families*

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Colleen R. Derr (EdD, Regent University) is president of Wesley Seminary at Indiana Wesleyan University, where she played an integral role in the development of the master of arts in children, youth, and family ministry and doctor of ministry in spiritual formation programs. With over thirty years of experience in local church ministry, she has developed a catechism program for the Wesleyan Church: *Building Faith Kids*, a preteen discipleship resource; *Explore*; and numerous training and leadership development tools.

The Holy Spirit's Role in Preparation for Communication

Scripture, as we have seen, tells of the witness of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christ before he began his years of ministry. Jesus also instructs his disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit to come on them before they begin their ministry: "While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. 'This,' he said, 'is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now'" (Acts 1:4-5). Acts 2 describes this powerful scene of the Holy Spirit coming on the disciples and all those gathered in the room:

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. (Acts 2:1-4)

The Holy Spirit came before Jesus' ministry, the Holy Spirit came before the disciples' ministry, and the Holy Spirit must come before your communication if it is to be transformational. Although the testimony from the life of Christ and the disciples would be enough to suggest we, too, need the witness of the Spirit prior to ministry, the Old Testament narratives also show this pattern. "Every major office in the life of Israel was to be filled by someone anointed by the Holy Spirit. The priest and the king always began their work by being anointed with olive oil, which was symbolic of the Spirit of God" (Kinlaw, 2010, p. 93). Examples include Moses, Joseph, Saul, David, Daniel, and Joshua:

- When Moses calls out to the Lord for help, God responds, "Gather for me seventy of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tent of meeting, and have them take their place there with you. I will come down and talk with you there; and I will take some of the spirit that is on you and put it on them; and they shall bear the burden of the people along with you so that you will not bear it all by yourself" (Num 11:16-17).
- Joshua is said to have the Spirit (Num 27:18).
- Saul is anointed by Samuel and given instructions on where to go, who he will encounter, and what he is to do. This includes prophesying when the Spirit of the Lord "possesses" him (1 Sam 10:1, 6).
- David is also anointed by Samuel, "and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward" (1 Sam 16:13).
- Joseph is recognized by Pharaoh as possessing the Spirit of God (Gen 41:38).
- The Spirit of the Lord takes possession of Gideon prior to battle (Judg 6:34).
- Daniel is "endowed with a spirit of the holy gods" (Dan 4:8) that enables him to understand mystery and interpret dreams (Dan 4:18).

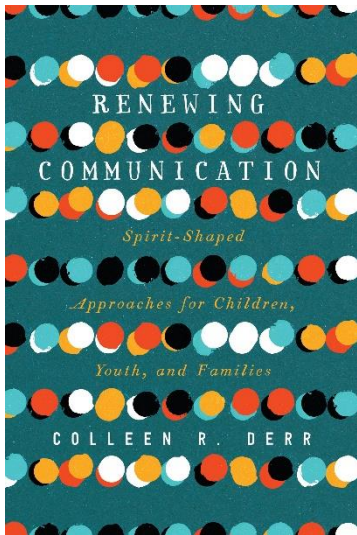
Throughout Scripture we see times of preparation in which the Lord's Spirit comes to rest on his servants prior to battle, prior to ministry, prior to leaving, or prior to change. The Holy Spirit's anointing is needed prior for us as well. We must



Karin DeHaven, academic publicist
800.843.4587 ext. 4096 or kdehaven@ivpress.com



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earnestly seek the Spirit's infilling in our own lives to transform us and to guide us as we prepare and deliver communication that is transformational.

The Holy Spirit is also at work in the heart of every child, youth, and adult in numerous ways before you ever begin to plan the speaking. The Holy Spirit prepares us for service, and he prepares others to receive. In Matthew 13:3-9 Jesus tells the parable of the sower, which describes someone who sowed seeds on different kinds of soil. Some of the seeds in the parable fell on rocky ground and did not take root and grow, other seeds fell by the wayside and were eaten by the birds, some fell among the thorns and were choked out, but others fell on good ground and yielded a crop. Jesus explains in Mathew 13:18-23 how those not ready to hear the "word of the kingdom" did not take root and grow and produce: "But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Mt 13:23 NKJV). No matter how profound our words, appropriate our goals, and impressive our methods, it is only the Holy Spirit who can prepare the "soil" to be receptive to the Word. In our preparation we must seek the Holy Spirit's guidance, we must seek the Holy Spirit's infilling in our own lives, and we must pray for the Spirit to prepare the hearts and minds of the children, teens, and adults we are called to serve.

How do we seek the filling of the Holy Spirit in our own lives and in the lives of those we serve? First, we must recognize the need for the Spirit to prepare our message, the hearers, and us. Next, we must believe that the Holy Spirit can fill us and fill them (Acts 15:8-9). Finally, we must be willing to be filled.

—Taken from chapter one "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Transformational Communication"



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