

There's Something Missing

by Warren Wiersbe

To make an impact on the world, we must be alive to the Holy Spirit, have faith in the name of Jesus, and break with past sin.

Duration: 34:59

Scripture: John 6:66, Acts 3:6, Acts 4:7-10, Acts 4:12, Acts 19:2, Acts 19:20, Hebrews 12:1

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Evangelism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses how the word of the Lord spread and impacted people's lives in the absence of modern communication tools. He emphasizes the importance of having the right kind of people to spread the gospel effectively. The speaker highlights three groups of people who played a significant role in evangelizing a whole district in three years. These groups include believers who were alive to the Holy Spirit, Jewish men attempting to cast out demons, and backslidden believers who were willing to let go of their sins. The speaker encourages the audience to be people who are alive to the Holy Spirit and willing to be used by God to make a tremendous impact on an unsaved world.

Transcript

During the difficult days of World War II, the Seabees had a motto that read, the difficult we do immediately, the impossible takes a little longer. And what we read of their work, they lived up to their motto. The Apostle Paul could have claimed that motto for himself, the difficult we do immediately, the impossible takes a little longer, because the Apostle Paul never went to an easy place.

In the ministry of the Lord there are no easy places. He went to Athens, that great center of Greek culture, a city wholly given to idolatry. And then he went to Corinth, a city wholly given to immorality.

And then he went to Ephesus, where the two were joined together. And idolatry and immorality were blended in the worship of Diana of the Ephesians. And interestingly enough, he stayed for three years.

Now Ephesus was the kind of a city you would visit and say, well, we may come back, or we'll appoint a committee to investigate it. Most of us do this when there's a hard job. The best way to get nothing done sometimes is to investigate it.

But the Apostle Paul came into Ephesus, he looked the place over, he said, I'm going to stay here. Here's a city given over to superstition. They're worshipping an image that came down from heaven, so they say.

Here's a city given over to wealth and luxury and immorality. And I want to plant a church here. And he did.

In fact, seven or eight years later when he wrote a letter to this church, our letter to the Ephesians, it turned out to be probably one of the deepest, most profound doctrinal letters that he ever wrote. The Apostle Paul, in a difficult place, founded a church. But when he came there, there wasn't very much there to build a church out of.

It's interesting in the passage that we read from Acts chapter 19, Luke seems to focus on three groups of people. He focuses, first of all, on twelve disciples of John the Baptist. And then he moves over on to seven Jewish men who were trying to cast out demons.

Then he focuses on some backslidden believers who were holding on to sin. And this is rather difficult material to use for the building of a church. Paul's great concern was to build a church.

Not to build a crowd, not to entertain, but to build a church. And in order to build a church, you have to have the right kind of material. Paul was the kind of a pastor who wouldn't build with wood and hay and stubble.

He wanted to build with gold and silver and precious stones. And the amazing thing is this. At the end of three years, all Asia heard the gospel.

That means that whole district there that the Romans called Asia. Luke mentions it in verse 10. All who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus.

Verse 17. This was known to all the Jews and Greeks. Verse 20.

So mightily grew the word of God. No printing press. No mimeograph machine.

No telephone. No TV. No radio.

And yet the word of the Lord got out and touched everybody's life. Now in order for this to happen, you've got to have the right kind of people. Paul never ministered by himself.

He always ministered in the Spirit through the lives of other people. We have our own Ephesus. We have a city wholly given over to idolatry.

We have a city that, like Ephesus, worships immorality. We have a wealthy city where people are living on luxuries and are ignoring necessities. And we're having a difficult time touching people with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In three years' time, Paul evangelized a whole district, a whole area. How did he do it? Well, he did it through the lives of people who had some very definite spiritual characteristics. Now would you look with me at these three groups of people and learn from these three groups of people what kind of people we need to be if we are going to reach people for Jesus Christ? I think that's the heart's desire of most Christians.

I think that most of the people who make up this Moody Church family diligently pray that God will touch the lives of people in the city of Chicago and around the world. Our church family touches literally thousands of people in the course of a week. Our radio ministry, by the grace of God, touches millions of

people around the world.

And our great concern is that this touch become a touch of blessing that's only going to be so if you and I are the kind of people God can use. There are three characteristics that I need to possess and that you need to possess if God is going to use us. Number one, we must be people who are alive to the Holy Spirit.

When Paul came to Ephesus, he looked for believers. He found some disciples. Now ordinarily in the book of Acts, the word disciple means a believer.

But it's possible to be a disciple and not be a believer. I read in John chapter 6 about the crowd that was following the Lord Jesus and from that time forth many of his disciples went from him and walked no more with him. Paul discovered 12 men who were disciples of John the Baptist.

And John the Baptist had been dead for years. And as Paul began to fellowship with these men, he noticed that something was missing. And he said to them, Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? Now the mistranslation of verse 2 has caused no end of confusion.

Whole denominations have been built on the mistranslation of verse 2. Paul did not say, did you receive the Holy Spirit as a second blessing subsequent to your conversion? He didn't say that. He said, when you believed once and for all, did you receive the Holy Spirit? Because the test of whether or not a person is truly born again is the presence of the Holy Spirit. Romans chapter 8 verse 9, If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

And here were men who were religious, but didn't have the Holy Spirit. They had been baptized, but they didn't have the Holy Spirit. They had believed a certain doctrine up to a certain point, but they did not have the Holy Spirit.

And when two real Christians get together, the Holy Spirit in one heart reaches out to the Holy Spirit in the other heart and immediately there is a oneness. You've noticed this, haven't you? I've had the experience, I'm sure you have too, of boarding a plane or a bus or sitting in a restaurant and someone joins you, sits next to you or begins to chat with you and before long, someone down inside says, Aha, his heart is bearing witness to your heart, his spirit is bearing witness to your spirit. The Holy Spirit is putting you together and you discover you're believers.

And you have something in common. You may know nothing about each other except you're believers. And Paul, when he was with these men, detected something was missing.

Now, I don't want to be misunderstood or I don't want you to think I'm critical. Paul did not say, Did you perform miracles when you believed? Paul did not even say, Did you speak in tongues when you believed? Paul said, Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? And they said, We don't even know that the Holy Spirit has been given. Now, John the Baptist had taught about the Holy Spirit.

He had said, I'm going to baptize you in water, but one is coming after me who shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit. I am the voice, but he is the word. And when he comes and you believe on him, you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

They didn't know about that. They were living on the wrong side of Pentecost. They said, We didn't know the Holy Spirit had been given.

Now, Paul assumed that they had been baptized. Is that not interesting? Paul didn't say, Were you ever baptized? He assumed they had been baptized. In the New Testament, all people who professed faith were baptized.

Paul said, When you were baptized, what baptism was it? Well, he said, It was the baptism of John. Well, he said, No wonder you don't have the Holy Spirit. He had not yet been given.

My assumption is, though I cannot prove it, that these twelve men were the disciples of Apollos. In the previous chapter, Apollos had come to Ephesus, and all he knew was the baptism of John. You see, you can only lead a person where you've been yourself.

And Apollos hadn't been there yet, and so he couldn't share this with his followers. Paul had been there. Paul knew the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And Paul said, You need to believe on Jesus Christ. He died for you. He arose again.

He's gone back to heaven. He has sent the Holy Spirit. And you can trust Him as your Savior, and they did.

Now, the interesting thing, my friends, is this, that when they believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and were baptized, Paul laid hands on them and gave them the gift of the Spirit. There are those who tell me that they can do this. There are those who tell us that today someone, if he holds the right church office, can put his hands upon you and give you the gift of the Holy Spirit.

My understanding of the Word of God is that the apostles did this. And if you can find any apostles running around, they'll do it for you. But you won't find any.

When the apostle John passed into glory, that was the end of the apostleship. We have no apostles today. Why did God do it this way? For this reason.

God was about to start a wonderful new work in Ephesus. Paul had ministered in Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth. Ephesus was now going to be the new center for three years.

God wanted to make sure that every believer in the Ephesian church recognized the leadership of Paul. And so God did an unusual thing. When I was saved, I received the Holy Spirit immediately.

I will never forget standing in the back of that high school auditorium, listening to the preacher preach. I didn't even wait for the invitation. I just simply lifted my heart to Jesus Christ and believed on Him.

And instantly the witness of the Spirit of God was in my heart. And I knew I was one of God's children. But God said to these men, I want you to recognize the authority of Paul.

He is going to mediate to you the gift of the Holy Spirit. But from then on, anybody who trusted the Lord Jesus in the city of Ephesus received the Holy Spirit instantly. Now, it's so easy for us to go on a theological detour and discuss the laying on of hands, the speaking in tongues.

It's the last time you find speaking in tongues in the book of Acts. The important thing here is this. Until people are alive to the Holy Spirit, God can't use them.

Suppose Paul had tried to build a church with this kind of material. People who were living way in the past. People who were baptized and religious, but they had never ever truly been born again.

You can't build a church like that. Paul says to us today, are you alive to the Holy Spirit? When you get up in the morning, do you depend upon the Holy Spirit of God to give you grace and guidance and government and all that you need for that day? Several years later, when Paul was in prison, he wrote a letter to the Ephesian church. And over and over again in that letter, he talks about the Holy Spirit.

Twelve times in that letter he mentions the Holy Spirit. I suppose the most important reference for this particular passage is Ephesians 1, verse 13. In whom ye also trusted after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also when ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.

My friend, do you have that down in your heart? I don't care if you've been baptized, gone through a religious ceremony, even become a member of some group. Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? Have you the witness of God's Spirit, the seal of God's Spirit? Verse 14, the down payment of God's Spirit in your heart? All the way through the letter to the Ephesians, he tells them to depend on the Holy Spirit. Are you alive to the Holy Spirit? Now, don't be afraid of the Holy Spirit.

He loves you. He lives in you. He wants to enlighten you.

He's the Spirit of truth. He wants to empower you. He wants to enable you.

He wants to develop in you and me the person of Jesus Christ and make us more like the Master. God is not going to do much in the city of Chicago unless you and I are alive to the Holy Spirit. That's the first characteristic.

Now, there's a second characteristic. We move from these twelve men to these seven Jewish men who are out casting out demons. I have to chuckle to myself when I read about these men.

Sort of a second-hand experience. We admonish you in the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches. The second characteristic of God's people, if we're going to make any kind of an impact at all, we must have faith in the name of Jesus Christ.

That may sound strange to you. You say, Pastor, why don't you say faith in the Word of God? Faith in the name of Jesus Christ. I sat down and went over the book of Acts once again.

I just turned page after page of the book of Acts. And I was amazed to discover that the power in the book of Acts was faith in the name of Jesus. In Acts chapter 3, John and Peter are coming up to the temple and there's a beggar there and he begs from them.

And Peter says, "...Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I unto thee. In the name of Jesus, stand up and walk." And he did. In Acts chapter 4, they drag the apostles before the court and they say, "...We command you never again to speak in this name, never again to preach in this name." By what name or what power did you do this? And John says and Peter says, "...Be it known unto you in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God has raised from the dead, does this man stand before you whole." When they got back to their church service after they were dismissed from the court, they had a prayer meeting and they prayed like this, "...Oh, we pray that you will grant us power, that we might bring glory to the name of your Son, Jesus." The thing that concerned the early church was

the name of Jesus.

And God is saying to us today that you and I are not going to make much of an impact in our area unless we have faith in the name of Jesus. Now, far too many people use the name of Jesus the way these seven men used it as a formula, as a magical device to get something done. The name of Jesus is something we tack on the end of a prayer.

We're not sure that Jesus would ask what we ask, but we put it there anyway. We're not sure that Jesus would do what we do, but we put his name there anyway. And the Word of God says to me, I don't know what it says to you, but it says to me, unless we have faith in the name of Jesus, we are not going to make any kind of an impact upon the world around about us.

Now, it may surprise you to discover most people aren't too concerned about the name of some denomination or the name of some church or the name of some great man. You can stop hundreds of people in the city of Chicago and ask them even who D.L. Moody was and they won't know. The important thing is that people know the name of Jesus.

And I read here that they tried to use the name of Jesus and God would not honor it. Now, when you pray, you pray in the name of Jesus. God is not going to bless our ministry unless we pray.

Many years ago in our Youth for Christ ministry, Bob Cook used to say to us, and I believe it's true, if you can explain what's going on in your ministry, God's not doing it. And I think it's true. We get so cut and dried.

We say, well, God blesses Moody Church because of this and that. I would like to know what the this and that are. God blesses any church because people take the name of Jesus and come to the throne of grace and ask for what they need.

You've been concerned about some dear unsaved person. Take the name of Jesus with you and go to the throne of grace and claim that unsaved friend for Jesus in his name. The tragedy is too many people don't pray these days.

You stop many Christians and say, what are you really praying about these days? Well, I ask the Lord to bless me and bless the church and bless my family and bless my enemies. What are you really praying for? Do you ever name the high rises to God and in the name of Jesus claim them? Do you ever get a hold of lives that are walking the streets, running the streets, and claim them for the name of Jesus? Do you ever lay hands on a radio station and claim it in the name of Jesus? You say, what are you talking about? I'm talking about what they did in the book of Acts. Paul moved into Athens and in the name of Jesus he claimed it.

And he moved into Corinth and they fought him, but in the name of Jesus he claimed it. He moved into Ephesus. We're going to see in our next message they started a riot.

And in the name of Jesus Paul claimed victory. I suggest to us that if we're the kind of Christians who are alive to the Holy Spirit and who have faith in the name of Jesus, things are going to happen. There's a third characteristic.

And this one gets very close to home. These seven men tried to cast out demons in the name of Jesus and the demons spoke up and said, I'm acquainted with Jesus. Every demon knew His name.

And I'm acquainted with Paul. I'm sure that the demons curse the name of Paul. I wonder if any demon knows your name.

I wonder if anywhere in the councils of the prince of darkness your name comes up because you are invading his territory and hurting his work. I hear people say, boy, the devil really got after me. I seriously doubt whether Satan pays much attention to most of us.

He has some junior demon who is watching over most of us to get us into difficulty. But when you start moving in and claiming the name of Jesus, when you start living in the power of the Holy Spirit, then hell gets concerned. The demon said, I don't know who you are.

And he leaped upon them and sent them out naked. And when the word got out that you don't play around with the name of Jesus, you don't take the name of Jesus lightly, you don't use it like a magic charm. When the word got out, notice what happens.

The believers got concerned. What kind of a Christian will God use to make an impact upon an area? A Christian who is alive to the Holy Spirit. A Christian who has faith in the name of Jesus.

Third, a Christian who breaks with his past sin. Now, Ephesus was a city given over to magic. Not ledger domain, but black magic.

Incantations and spells and demonology and witchery. And this was big business in Ephesus. Here were a number of people who were saved.

Look at verse 18. And many that believed came and confessed and showed their deeds. Many of those also who used magical arts brought their books together and burned them before all men.

50,000 pieces of silver. That's 50,000 days wages. Here were Christians, believers, members of the church, holding on to their past sin.

And the Holy Spirit of God says, I can't use people like that. And God began to convict these people. The verb here in verse 18, came means they kept on coming.

They kept on confessing. They kept on showing their deeds. They kept on burning their books.

It was a repeated thing. One group would come and say, Paul, we've got to confess to you. We've been teaching in your Sunday school and holding on to our past sin.

And we're sorry. We want God to forgive us. And here it is.

Burn it up. And no sooner had that group finished than another group came and said, We've been assisting in the ministry. We've been out visiting, Paul.

And we've been holding on to our past sin. What is it that keeps a church from moving forward? Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. It's a tragedy when we as God's people do not make a clean break with the past.

You say, Preacher, it would cost me too much to make a clean break with the past. I know there's sin in my life and I'm holding on to it and I'm covering it up and nobody knows about it. God knows about it.

You know about it. That's enough. And eventually, if you wait long enough, everybody will know about it because my Bible says, Be sure your sin will find you out.

That was spoken to believers, not unbelievers. You say, well, it costs too much to get rid of it. It costs them 50,000 pieces of silver.

You say, it costs too much to hold on to sin. The most expensive thing in the world is sin. Look at all the money that was wasted in sin.

And they came and they brought their sin. They said, we want to just turn this over. Here it is.

I want to get rid of it. Burn it up. Perhaps some of us need to do this.

You see, God wants to use us to make a tremendous impact on an unsaved world. God wants to work in and through the Moody Church and every other gospel preaching church where people are alive to the Holy Spirit. Oh, how wonderful it is when the wind of the Holy Spirit is blowing.

You're breathing the fresh air of the wind of the Holy Spirit. And new life comes in. And new ideas and new power.

And no one is saying, well, we never did it that way before. Or, well, we've always done it like this. Or, do you think it will work? When the wind of the Holy Spirit is blowing and God is at work, then God can use us.

When people are concerned about the name of Jesus, they get on their knees and say, God, I don't deserve this, and Moody Church doesn't deserve it, but in the name of Jesus, supply this missionary money that we need. In the name of Jesus, help us to meet our faith promise for home missions. In the name of Jesus, open up the High Rises.

In the name of Jesus, deliver this man from his sin. This is the way they lived in the book of Acts. And this is meant to be the pattern for the way we're supposed to live today.

Ah, but we're so accustomed to our routine, we're so accustomed to our easy way of doing it. Oh, that God would get a hold of my heart, and I pray get a hold of all of our hearts and bring us to the point where we break with our old life. I notice here that when the believers in the church brought their sin and got rid of it, things began to happen.

Verse 20 says, so mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed. That's what always happens. Revival is not something a preacher develops from a pulpit.

Revival is not something a choir sings to us. Revival is not something that God just suddenly gives to us. Revival is the result of Christians cleaning house.

Revival is the result of Christians going home to the library and pulling out of the library the books that ought to be burned and the records that ought to be broken. Revival is the result of people bringing habits and practices and sins and giving them to Jesus and saying, I'm through with it by the grace of God, deliver me. And then the Word of God mightily begins to prevail.

I think it can be done. You see, our problem is we create our own obstacles. The Word of God is here.

The Holy Spirit is here. The Gospel is here. The church is here.

A needy world is here. It's all here. Everything is here.

But we set up the obstacles. We ignore the Holy Spirit. We have our own substitutes.

Several years ago at the Southern Baptist Convention, a preacher made the statement that if God were to take the Holy Spirit away from His church, 90% of what's going on would go right on and nobody would know the difference. Sad to say this is true. Our routine, our schedule, our business as usual, we neglect the Holy Spirit.

We ignore the power of the name of Jesus. Do you remember what Jesus said to His disciples before He went back to heaven? All authority in heaven and on earth is given to Me. All authority.

He ascended up to heaven far above all principalities and powers. Far above every name that is named. There's not a name that you can name that is higher than the name of Jesus.

And that's the name that we claim. But we ignore it. We put up our own roadblocks.

We hold on to our old sin. We cherish it. We cultivate it.

We say, well, I know I'm going to heaven so I can hold on to this. Well, I'm doing my best to serve the Lord so I can hold on to this. And oh, when God's people come clean, then God begins to bless.

Of all the men who have stood in this Moody Church pulpit to preach, I suppose none, as a visiting preacher, none commanded more attention than Gypsy Smith. What a godly man he was. Whenever the Gypsy used to come to Chicago to preach, you could be sure there would be tremendous blessing.

Someone came to him one day and said, I want to experience revival. What should I do? And in his own loving way, the Gypsy said to him, Go home. Draw a circle.

Get in the middle of that circle. And ask God for revival beginning in that circle. We used to sing many years ago, Lord, send a revival and let it begin in me.

Are you alive to the Holy Spirit today? Do you find authority in the name of Jesus? Have we come clean before God? When we have, God says, My Word is going to start to move and I will shake things and I will do things you've never seen before. And everybody in Chicago is going to know that something is going on among those people at Moody Church. And Jesus Christ will get the glory.

We pray, Our Father, stir our hearts. Deliver us from business as usual. Help us, we pray, to experience a fresh moving of the Spirit of God, a new consciousness of the authority that we have in Christ.

And, O Lord, cleanse our hearts of sin. Help us to burn the books. Help us to pay whatever price is necessary that our lives might be clean and usable.

I pray for those here today who do not know our Savior. Oh, that they would come to know Him. And that those of us who believe would truly experience reviving.

For we pray it in Jesus' name and for His sake, Amen.

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