

Introduction

What Spirit-Empowered Preaching Looks Like

Everybody needs a hero. My childhood hero of choice was Superman—faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive. I think the transformation of mild-mannered Clark Kent into the bold and courageous Superman was something everyone could identify with. Judging from outward appearances, Clark Kent wasn't much. But we all knew what was underneath that shirt and tie. The "S" on his chest stood for the true power inside him.

Do preachers have a hidden *S* underneath their ministerial garb—not an *S* pointing to their superhuman strength, but an *S* pointing to the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit? Does the Holy Spirit still empower preachers today? If so, how? Do we pray and study throughout our week like a Clark Kent, only to change into blue tights and a red cape on Sunday morning in hopeful expectation of something supernatural happening? Or do we begin our sermons as the mild-mannered Clark Kent, waiting expectantly for the Spirit to miraculously transform us at some point of the message into Superman, so we can fly out of the pulpit at high noon every week?

"Nonsense," you may be saying to yourself, "preachers are just human beings like everybody else." Yet in a 2004 Knight Ridder news article on the Holy Spirit, one evangelical pastor had this to say about the role of the Holy Spirit in Christian's life: "We are Clark Kent, but with the Holy Spirit, we become Superman."

When I read a statement like that, immediately my childhood images of Superman come to mind: able to bend steel bars with his bare hands, able to see through walls with X-ray vision, able to lift massive objects with superhuman strength, able to leap tall buildings with a single bound, faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, it's a bird, it's a plane, it's . . . a Spirit-filled Christian? Talk of Christians turning into Superman via the power of the Holy Spirit may fit well with a culture obsessed with "Extreme Makeovers," but it certainly has no foundation in Scripture. In fact, Paul's self-assessment as a God-called, Spirit-filled preacher of the Gospel stands in stark contrast to any Superman mentality: "I came to you in weakness and in fear, and with much trembling" (1 Cor. 2:3).

Paul doesn't quite sound like Superman, does he? Yet in the very next verse Paul affirms that underneath all his trembling and weakness, his preaching donned the *S*—not of Superman, but of the Holy Spirit: "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom [not even Superman's!], but on God's power" (1 Cor. 2:4). Paul acknowledges that his powerful preaching is not from anything within himself; he plainly tells the Corinthians there is nothing special about him: "What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants" (1 Cor. 3:5). It seems the Holy Spirit turned Paul into a servant rather than a Superman, and a weak one at that.

Furthermore, I cannot recall Superman boasting about his inherent weakness in regards to kryptonite. To do so would lessen his superhero image. Yet Paul not only admits his weaknesses; he *boasts* in them! "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:9).

Judging from the verses quoted above, Paul doesn't sound like a superhero at all. Yet no honest reader of the New Testament would deny the power of God that accompanied Paul's ministry of the Word. As pastors today, we live in a church culture filled with large

egos, oversized pride, and superhero expectations—pressures some say the man of steel himself could not handle! Yet we must reject any notion that we are Superman called to be a superhero. The hero of our preaching is Jesus Christ, and our goal as preachers is to be Spirit-filled and Spirit-empowered so that our audience knows the difference between supernatural preaching and superhero preaching! Preaching is not an exhibition of the Superman skills you may have learned in seminary; rather, as Paul says, it is a demonstration of the Spirit's power. The question for us is, How do we get there?

As preachers we are quick to confess the need for the Spirit's power in our preaching, but we fall short when it comes to explaining *how* to involve the Holy Spirit in our preaching. The fruit of evangelical publishing and scholarship over the last two decades demonstrates that as evangelicals we are far more able to tell what the Spirit *does not do* in preaching as opposed to what the Spirit *must do* if powerful proclamation is to take place. My conviction is that we have failed to connect the discipline of homiletics with the doctrine of pneumatology, and as a result we find ourselves “surprised by the Spirit” when he does move. *Spirit-Led Preaching* seeks to establish a positive theology of the Spirit's role in preaching by building upon the theological fusion of Word and Spirit.

The Purpose and Plan of Spirit-Led Preaching

The premise upon which *Spirit-Led Preaching* is based is this: if Spirit-empowered sermons are going to be preached, then a Spirit-led approach to preaching must be followed. *Spirit-Led Preaching* is more about a mind-set than a method. It is directed toward keeping our hearts aligned with the Spirit, rather than keeping our outlines in line with the same letter. Our sermon preparation and sermon delivery must be intentionally and prayerfully carried out under the leadership and power of the Holy Spirit. In order to accomplish this, the preacher must come to see preaching as the Spirit's ministry, not the preacher's own ministry. The Spirit is the one who does the preaching through the proclamation of the Word. God in his grace uses us—personalities and all—to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. The preacher who is Spirit-driven, Spirit-led, and Spirit-

dependent will also be Spirit-empowered! Preaching is truly the Spirit's ministry. Just think of how many ways the Spirit is involved in preaching:

Ten Ways the Holy Spirit Is at Work in Preaching

1. The Spirit's inspiration of the text.
2. The conversion of the preacher to faith in Jesus Christ.
3. The call of the preacher to preach the Word.
4. The character of the preacher to live the Word.
5. The illumination of the preacher's heart and mind in study.
6. The empowerment of the preacher in proclaiming the Word.
7. The testimony to Jesus Christ as Lord and mediator.
8. The opening of the hearts of those who hear and receive the Word.
9. The application of the Word of God to the listeners' lives.
10. The production of lasting fruit displayed in the lives of Spirit-filled believers.

Spirit-Led Preaching is designed to help preachers see just how much of preaching is influenced by the Holy Spirit. In chapters 1 through 5, I build the theological foundation for Spirit-led preaching by examining the biblical, hermeneutical, and theological foundations regarding preaching and the Spirit. In chapters 6 through 9, I address the practical implications of Spirit-led preaching.

Preaching is an act of surrender, in which in our humble brokenness before God, we are compelled to carry out our preaching ministry under the unceasing inner-compulsion of the Holy Spirit. Spirit-led preaching does not result from our own strength or power, but from God's power as the Holy Spirit energizes and ignites the preaching of his Word.

The book unfolds in the following manner. In chapter 1 I look at the absence of the Holy Spirit in preaching and give some explanations as to why we don't emphasize the Spirit in preaching. In chapter 2 I define preaching in terms of the Spirit, highlighting the Spirit's biblical ministries that form the basis of Spirit-led preaching. In chapter 3 I present the biblical evidence for Spirit-led preaching by examining Old Testament prophetic preaching and New Testament

Pauline preaching. In chapter 4 I make the case for a recovery of the illumination of the Holy Spirit for preaching, and will clarify the Spirit's role between an inspired text and an illumined interpreter. In chapter 5 I make the case that Spirit-led preaching must implement a proper theology of Word and Spirit.

Chapter 6 begins the practical application by discussing the preacher's conversion, call, training, and character, and how the Spirit influences them. Chapter 7 turns to the preacher's preparation of the sermon under the Spirit's leadership, noting that what the Spirit illumines in the study, he empowers in the pulpit. Chapter 8 covers the practical issues of sermon delivery, and emphasizes the three-way conversation that takes place during preaching between the preacher, the congregation, and the Holy Spirit. Finally, chapter 9 addresses the Spirit's empowerment for preaching popularly referred to as the anointing.

Before we begin, I want to let you know up front what this book is not intended to be or do. This book is not intended to be a "how-to" introduction to sermon preparation. This book is intended to be read alongside those type of books, to remind you that the Holy Spirit is preparing you to preach as you prepare to preach his text! Nor is this book a call to practice mysticism or illuminism, or to seek special revelations or other types of extrabiblical experiences. The book is very much grounded in and a biblical theology of God's Word and God the Holy Spirit.

I pray that the book will cause you to become more holistic in your approach to preaching and will foster in you a fresh dependence upon the Spirit in your life and in your preaching ministry. The book will succeed if it causes you to be more sensitive to the Spirit's role in your preaching. To take a stand on the Word of God is to take a stand for the Spirit of God who inspired it. To preach the Word is to honor the Spirit, and to honor the Spirit is to preach his Word. Homiletics shall not separate, what God hath joined together!

Just like every kid needs a hero, so every preacher needs the Holy Spirit. Although we are not called to be a Superman in the pulpit, we are called to be servants—servants of the Word of God, under the empowerment of the Spirit of God, and all for the glory of God. So the next time you get up to preach, remember this: there is an unseen

S that accompanies you to the pulpit. No, the *S* is not written across your chest; it is written deep upon your heart and sealed upon your very soul, and it stands for the Spirit—the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 1

Missing in Action: Where Is the Holy Spirit When We Preach?

“Our generation is rapidly losing its grip upon the supernatural; and as a consequence, the pulpit is rapidly dropping to the level of the platform. And this decline is due, more than anything else, to ignoring the Holy Spirit as the supreme inspirer of preaching. We would rather see a great orator in the pulpit, forgetting that the least expounder of the Word, when filled with the Spirit, is greater than he.”

—A. J. Gordon

I can still remember the conversation to this day: “Preacher, all these people haven’t come today to hear you preach. I know it’s Sunday morning, and it’s church, but they’re not interested in hearing preaching today. They want to hear the music group sing, not hear you preach.” Those were shocking words to a young pastor with his heart set on preaching the Word of God and winning the world for Jesus Christ. As this older deacon lectured me on what really mattered to the congregation on such a special day (no preaching = more music), I found my mind drifting back to Romans 10:14 where Paul says, “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to

them?” Hearing music is one thing. But hearing the Word of God proclaimed, Paul says, is essential to bringing people to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

I have nothing against great music in a church worship service; in fact, more often than not, it warms and stirs my heart before I preach. And I have nothing against using the arts in worship. Readings, dramas, and visuals can enhance our worship experience. But what I am dead set against is allowing all these “good things” to crowd out and push out the “most needed thing”—the preaching of the Word! What that deacon was sharing with me that day opened my eyes to a stark reality and a growing trend I have seen among churches today: Preaching is no longer the priority of the church.

The Contemporary Setting

Preaching has once again fallen on hard times. From a postmodern perspective, preaching is seen by many as rationalistic, elitist, and authoritarian. In a culture that worships at the altar of relativism and idolizes ideas that do not offend anyone, there is little tolerance for any preacher to be so bold as to proclaim, “Thus says the Lord.” Cultural critic and theologian Al Mohler believes biblical preaching has been replaced with needs-based, human-centered approaches to avoid what he calls “a potentially embarrassing confrontation with biblical truth.”¹ John Piper laments the decline of faithful biblical exposition in the face of a changing culture when he observes how preaching has become “relational, anecdotal, humorous, casual, laid-back, absorbed in human need, fixed on relational dynamics, heavily saturated with psychological categories, and wrapped up in strategies for emotional healing.”²

Preaching has lost its theological mandate, and as a result we have replaced preachers with speakers because we are told people want dialogue without doctrine and talks without truth. Theology is out, storytellers are in, and as a result we are seeing an entire generation

1 Al Mohler, “The Urgency of Preaching,” Weblog 25 June, 2004. Available at www.crosswalk.com/news/weblogs/mohler.

2 John Piper, “Preaching as Worship: Meditations on Expository Exultation,” *Trinity Journal* 16 (Spring 1995): 30.

of preachers who are more driven to be effective communicators than to be Spirit-empowered preachers. Methodology trumps theology, and sensitivity to the audience has replaced sensitivity to the Spirit.

Even those who propose expository preaching as the cure to the ailments of preaching today are not always preaching expository sermons; and when they do preach them, they do not preach them in an engaging manner. Poorly preached sermons, no matter what kind they are, give preaching a black eye. My first experience with preaching came through Young Life, a youth ministry that seeks to impact teenagers with the gospel. When it was my turn to give the message, my leader told me, “Never forget cardinal rule number one: It’s a sin to bore people with the gospel of Jesus Christ!” If you are a preacher or preparing to be a preacher, let me challenge you right now to take a moment and pray, and determine in your heart today that if people come to church and leave bored, it will not be because of your preaching! I tell my students in my preaching classes, “If you are boring in the pulpit today, it’s no one’s fault but your own.”

Let’s face the facts for a moment. We have more commentaries today than we know what to do with or have time to read, so understanding the text should not be the problem. We have access to millions of illustrations with Google and the Web. We have entire Web sites dedicated to helping us preach, and we have powerful computer software that can exegete the Hebrew and Greek text for us at the click of a mouse. Even when it comes to delivery, we have programs like PowerPoint to help us present our message in a visually stimulating way. We are spoiled indeed! So why, even with all these wonderful tools and technologies, do our sermons come across as boring, uninteresting, irrelevant, and uninspiring?

Could it be that the most important ingredient to engaging and powerful preaching cannot be boxed up and sold on a shelf or downloaded from the Web? Could it be that the reason our sermons are so passionless and powerless today is not because we lack resources, but because we lack power—supernatural power? Yes, we have made ourselves more efficient—but has the Spirit made our messages more powerful?

Our calling as preachers is to proclaim the Bible, plain and simple. We must also deliver God's Word in an engaging and authentic manner. My conviction is that the Spirit of God and the Word of God come together in the heart and mind of the preacher to produce substantive and compelling sermons that transform the lives of listeners. A preacher's head and heart must meet together in the Holy Spirit to produce powerful preaching that informs the mind, inflames the heart, moves the will, and transforms the life. The Word of God is the substance of our message. It is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword (Heb. 4:12). The Spirit of God is the fire of our message. He ignites us as we prepare it and deliver it, and ignites our listeners as they hear it!

One way to overcome the apathy of the pew toward preaching is for preachers to return to the days of Jeremiah, when the Word of God was so powerfully shut up in his bones like fire that he couldn't hold it in (Jer. 20:9)! Come to the pulpit so full of the Word of God and so full of the Spirit of God—unable to even hold it in—and you will find that your people cannot wait to take it in! Moody said, "Catch on fire for Jesus, and the world will come and watch you burn."

What's the Solution?

Why have so many churches been unaffected by the ministry of the Word? I believe the answer lies in our failure to harness the synergistic power that results when the Spirit of God and the Word of God combine together in preaching. We have so emphasized the needs of the text—and those are crucial needs indeed—that the Spirit's contribution to preaching seems secondary at best. We forget that without the Spirit, we would have no text to begin with, and without the Spirit, we would have no illumined heart to discern the text (1 Cor. 2:14). Nothing short of a renaissance of the Holy Spirit's role in preaching will save powerless pulpits and sick churches from ineffective kingdom ministry.

In this book, I am not advocating replacing the emphasis on the Word with an emphasis on the Spirit. I am advocating adding the Spirit's emphasis to the present emphasis on preaching the Word. I

think A. J. Gordon's assessment is right. We have lost our sense of the supernatural, and as a result preaching has become the activity of man instead of the ministry of God.

Whatever Happened to the Holy Spirit?

Where did we get off track with regard to the supernatural—especially the Holy Spirit's involvement in preaching? Unfortunately, explanations are scarce and answers are few and far between. First of all, most textbooks on preaching have little to say about the Spirit. Even classic preaching texts like John Broadus's *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* have little to say about the Spirit in preaching. A generation of preachers in the 1930s and 1940s were raised on Andrew Blackwood's preaching texts, which also place little emphasis on the Spirit's involvement in preaching. In fact, the broad consensus of the literature as a whole reveals very little interest in the Spirit. Only recently, with the publication of books like Jerry Vines's and Jim Shaddix's *Power in the Pulpit* (1999), as well as Stephen and David Olford's *Anointed Expository Preaching* (1998), have textbooks on how to prepare a sermon incorporated more than a passing reference to the Spirit.

Preaching Definitions

One of the most obvious omissions of the Spirit's role in preaching is seen in how rare it is to find the Spirit incorporated into a definition of preaching. This is ironic, since the way you define something will ultimately determine the outcome you can expect. In general, preaching definitions tend to center around the preacher, the Bible, and delivery. Yet if preaching is the Spirit's ministry, and if the final goal of our preaching is a demonstration of the Spirit's power, then we must define preaching to encompass the rich theology of Word and Spirit from the very beginning. In the next chapter, I will develop the Spirit-led definition of preaching used throughout the rest of the book.

What does the Spirit's absence from the definitions of preaching reveal to us? First, I believe it shows just how post-theological

preaching has become. Contemporary preaching begins with the audience instead of God, and as a result preaching has become the trade of communicators, not pastor-theologians. As a result, many preaching books, Web sites, and preaching blogs focus heavily on the pragmatic side of preaching by emphasizing techniques, tips, mechanics, and the “how to” approach to preaching. Don’t get me wrong; we need to learn the pragmatic side of preaching, because the techniques and mechanical elements of preaching do help us to become better preachers. My concern is that often these books, Web sites, and blogs tell only half the story of what preaching is all about. We need to know how to put a sermon together, but before we tackle the how-tos, let’s first learn the why-do by establishing the theological foundation and spiritual dynamic of preaching.

Put another way, sound mechanics must be complemented by spiritual dynamics, lest we end up with a Rolls Royce sermon that looks great on paper but has no gas in the tank. In *Spirit-Led Preaching*, I am calling for a more holistic and theologically driven approach to preaching that by definition and design incorporates the dynamic Spirit of God ministering the living Word of God through the Spirit-empowered man of God.

Spirit-Led Preaching is intentionally centered on the theological and spiritual *dynamics* of preaching, while still maintaining the importance of good sermon *mechanics*. This means that our sermons can have clear structure and can be Spirit-filled at the same time. Some preachers do not believe you can have the Spirit and structure at the same time, because for them being led by the Spirit in preaching means unpredictability, and man-made structures tend to get in the way of the unpredictable and unstructured Spirit! In this view, any sermon with clarity and sound structure is decried as man’s creation, not the Spirit’s.

Yet when we begin to think about the Spirit’s work of inspiration, we would not conclude that the Spirit-inspired Word of God has no structure, would we? Of course not! The Bible is replete with structure, because the Spirit’s inspiration was captured in words, which we placed into sentences, which were combined into coherent paragraphs, which fit into the flow of the writer’s overall argument, and so on. So the Spirit can and does work within good, clear sermon

structure, especially if that structure is shaped by and anchored to the biblical text.

So is there a danger in having sound sermon structure and good preaching mechanics? Yes, the danger we face as preachers comes in the form of a misplaced confidence. For example, when I begin to think that the power and effectiveness of my sermon comes from how well-structured or how well-packaged my sermon is on a given Sunday, I will quench and grieve the true power of preaching—the Holy Spirit of God. As a preacher of God’s Word, I must constantly remind myself that the power of my sermon is not located in how well my outline comes together in alliterative fashion. The power of my sermon does not come from the balanced symmetry and parallelism of my three points and three subpoints. The power of my sermon does not come from my creative introduction or my perfect-fitting illustration. The preached message always finds its true source of power in the theological fusion of the Word of God and the Spirit of God joining together in Christological witness to the Son of God, coming through the proclamation of the man of God.

The Holy Spirit and Shyness

A second reason for the Spirit’s absence in preaching today has to do with the excesses and abuses attributed to the Spirit. Everything from laughing, crying, barking like a dog, meowing like a cat, passing out at the altar, jumping over pews, and transforming into Superman seems to be claimed as a true manifestation of the Spirit. It’s no wonder that James Forbes in his 1989 work *The Holy Spirit and Preaching* coined the phrase “Spirit-shy Christians” to describe believers who find talking about the Spirit to be an intimidating and anxiety-filled experience. Preachers are not exempt, by the way. James Montgomery Boice, a well-respected pastor and Bible expositor, confessed his own neglect of the Spirit in his preaching: “I had been in the ministry for about seven years when my morning preaching through Philippians, the Sermon on the Mount, and John eventually brought me to the discourses of John 14–16, in which

the work of the Holy Spirit is described. *Strange to say I had never done any serious preaching on the Holy Spirit before that time*³ (emphasis added).

As preachers we seem eager to tip our hats to the Holy Spirit's importance for our preaching, but we tend to clam up when asked to explain the Spirit's power in our own lives and in our own preaching. Once during my seminary days we had a chapel speaker who was going to discuss the life and preaching of Martyn-Lloyd Jones. I was excited because I knew Lloyd-Jones had some strong views about the Spirit and preaching. When the speaker finally came to Lloyd-Jones's views on the unction of the Holy Spirit for preaching, he said to us, "There are some beliefs that you are better off keeping to yourself and taking with you to the grave." With stifling statements like that, no wonder we have such a negative stigma about the Spirit!

Teaching Preaching

A third reason why the Spirit is neglected in preaching today can be traced to the way we teach preaching in our colleges and seminaries. For starters, preaching typically ends up in the "practical" department rather than the "theological." As a result, students show up in preaching class and say with a sigh of relief, "Finally, something practical I can use in ministry." These pragmatically driven students eagerly but naively put behind all their "history, theology, and language stuff" so they can finally "let loose and just preach the Bible!"

As one who teaches preaching, I spend the first several weeks of my class laying down the theological foundation for preaching. One semester, a student raised his hand and asked me, "When are we going to learn *how* to preach? This is all just a bunch of theory so far." Can I translate that: "This theological foundation is a waste of my time." With this type of mind-set, some students come to class wanting the *Top Ten Insights on How to Preach Like a Pro; Seven*

³ James Montgomery Boice, "The Preacher and Scholarship," in *The Preacher and Preaching* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1986), 96.

Steps to Preaching with Success, Five Days and Five Ways to Better Preaching, and Three Secrets to Spirit-Filled Sermons.

Their expectations are nothing short of the miraculous: Teach me to preach with the passion of a Johnny Hunt, teach me to preach with the power of an Adrian Rogers, teach me to preach with the eloquence and imagination of a Jerry Vines, and teach me to preach with the theological depth of John MacArthur. Disappointment sets in the minute I tell them that what they are seeing in the sermons of these preachers is the finished product that comes only at a great price: consistently walking with God in humility, daily seeking and surrendering to the Lord through prayer, and living clean and pure before God. Only after years of study, years of walking in holiness before God, and years of time spent alone with God in prayer, is the chamber of the Spirit-filled heart ready to give birth to powerful preaching.

Preaching is not so much about you preparing a sermon to preach; preaching is about God preparing you—his vessel—to preach.

Let me challenge you to allow God to prepare you through kneeling in the power of his presence through unceasing prayer. Allow God to prepare you by soaking in the glory of his Word through diligent study of the Bible. Allow God to prepare your character through repentance, cleansing, and living above reproach before the Lord. Then you will find yourself walking into the pulpit as a transformed, Spirit-filled preacher who delivers a burden, not a sermon; who expresses convictions, not opinions; and who preaches to please God, not an audience.

We need to return to teaching the theological foundation of preaching from the classical theological doctrines of bibliology and pneumatology. Our students need to see the complementary relationship between Word and Spirit, and to understand the proper function of sermon mechanics and sermon dynamics for preaching. They need to have as much zeal for the theological realities as they do for the how-to practicalities. Above all, they need to approach preaching with absolute dependence upon the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's role as the source and catalyst of all life-changing responses to preaching cannot be an afterthought; it is our consuming thought and prayer throughout our preparation and delivery!

This brief overview of the Spirit's absence should cause us to reexamine our own approach to preaching and ask ourselves some hard questions: How does the Holy Spirit inform my own theology of preaching? Have I thought through how the Word and the Spirit work together in preaching, or do I see them as theological opposites? How does my current sermon preparation demonstrate a dependence upon the Holy Spirit? What is my definition of preaching, and does it include the Spirit's ministries for preaching?

Ignorance, tradition, fear, and theological apathy can be overcome with a proper biblical theology of the Holy Spirit. Simply acknowledging the Spirit's presence is not enough. We must overcome our own Holy Spirit shyness and boldly invite the Spirit's gifts and ministries into the realm of our preaching. If preaching with power hinges on the Spirit's involvement, then it only makes sense to develop an approach to preaching that is Spirit-dependent, Spirit-led, and Spirit-demonstrated.

I want to end this chapter by asking you to reflect on this statement: "If the Spirit of God is left out of preaching, preaching does not really happen." Would you say that more often than not in your own preaching, the Spirit has been left out? Perhaps after reading through this chapter, God is convicting you that you need to make a fresh surrender to his power in your life and in your preaching. Maybe you've quenched the Spirit instead of surrendering to the Spirit because of anger toward your church, or toward your spouse, or toward God. Perhaps unconfessed sin has hindered the Spirit's work in your life, and right now he's calling on you to turn from it and confess it. Can you honestly say the Spirit is in control of you right now—that you are filled and controlled by him? Ask God to give you a fresh dependence upon his Holy Spirit for your life, your preaching and your church.