

# Experiencing *the* Power *of the* Holy Spirit

YOU CAN LIVE  
GOD'S BEST  
EACH DAY

LLOYD JOHN OGILVIE



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The names and characterizations in this book that are drawn from the author's ministry and counseling experience are usually rendered pseudonymously and as fictional composites. Any similarity between the names and characterizations of these individuals and real people is unintended and purely coincidental.

The author expresses his gratitude to the people who responded to his series of messages on the Holy Spirit on radio and television that eventually became the basis of some of the chapters of this book. He has quoted from some of these responses in various places within this book. Permission was granted at the time of writing the first draft of the manuscript.

## EXPERIENCING THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Revised edition of *The Greatest Counselor in the World*

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*To Dr. Robert Dockson—  
great friend, generous benefactor, and  
benchmark leader in education and business*



## Acknowledgments

*I want to express my gratitude for the people who have helped me experience the power of the Holy Spirit.*

*In 1948, when I was a freshman at Lake Forest College, I was an agnostic. Bruce Larson was the proctor of my dormitory. Every Wednesday evening he led a Bible study along with his friend Ralph Osborn. In response to their persistent invitations to attend the Bible study, one evening I reluctantly slipped in to listen. Both Bruce and Ralph were seniors who had become Christians during World War II. Their explanation of Christianity was exciting and impelling. After six months of never missing a meeting, they challenged me to give as much as I knew of myself to as much as I knew of Christ. I returned to my room and, after a long struggle that night, got on my knees and committed my life to Christ. I was given the gift of faith in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. That night 65 years ago, I began the adventure of being a disciple of Christ.*

*I changed my major from speech and dramatics to philosophy and theology, and my career plans from acting and media to preparation for the ministry. All through college and in seminary, I was privileged to have outstanding professors who encouraged my intellectual growth.*

*It was during the final stage of my theological training at New College, University of Edinburgh, that I had two professors who helped me move from being a “bitarian” who gratefully believed in the Father and the Son to a Trinitarian, who claimed the fullness of Paul’s benediction, “The grace of the Lord Jesus, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Corinthians 13:14).*

*My classes in New Testament theology, taught by Dr. James S. Stewart,*

*and dogmatics, taught by Dr. Thomas F. Torrance, were a life-changing intellectual and spiritual experience. Friendship with both of these giants in the Christian faith lasted through the years. Later, during my study leaves each summer, I returned to Edinburgh and visited with these former professors and confirmed my deepening convictions and experience of the Trinity.*

*My own Bible study, devotional life, and preaching during my service as a pastor in several churches enabled me to grow in my understanding of the Holy Spirit.*

*All through the years of my ministry I have been a participant in small groups, churches in miniature, in which I had the opportunity constantly to experience both encouragement and accountability. With trusted brothers and sisters in Christ, I was able to discover the power of the Holy Spirit for my personal life as well as my preaching and writing.*

*During my ministry in Hollywood, California, two of my prayer partners were Dr. Jack Hayford and Bishop Ken Ulmer. Together we claimed the power of the Holy Spirit for each other's challenges and opportunities, and worked closely in seeking to bring renewal in the churches and clergy of Los Angeles. For that we needed a constant replenishment of supernatural power. I am grateful to these two gifted brothers.*

*When I served as chaplain of the United States Senate I was very thankful for the five Bible studies I taught each week for the senators, their spouses, their staffs, and the general Senate staff. In each group we claimed the biblical promises of strength from the Holy Spirit for the high calling of leadership of the nation. I am particularly grateful for a prayer group of senators who met with me weekly in addition to the Senators' Bible Study. These dynamic men and women shared profound times of intercession for the nation and for each other's needs. I learned to take no one for granted. Underneath the surface, we all needed daily anointing with the Holy Spirit's wisdom, discernment, and courage.*

*Most of all, I want to express my greatest thanks to the One about Whom this book is written. Wonder Who that is? Press on to the first chapter!*

## Who Can Help Us?

Life is not easy. We only go around once. And for most it's no merry-go-round ride, but a difficult, bumpy journey.

Problems get us down. Minor problems and sometimes serious ones. Many of them never seem to go away. We overcome one obstacle and then get hit by another one with full force. Often problems pile up. Worry about them saps our strength and creativity. They accumulate and suddenly too many surface at the same time. Panic sets in. We wonder how much we can take. We can take one problem if we can concentrate all our energies on solving it. But so often our energies are dissipated by other problems that worsen at the same time. It's difficult to stay up during financial hard times. Our own health problems or those of our loved ones make us anxious. Our carefully laid plans get messed up by human error or carelessness. Foul-ups happen at work, at home. Then, as if staying afloat wasn't difficult enough, we feel the undertow of the larger social problems of violence, racial tensions, and human misery when we turn on the television news.

We keep waiting for a time when all our problems are behind us so we can really start living. It never comes. The stuff of life involves facing and solving problems—learning and growing through them. Who can help us overcome our seemingly endless list of problems?

## Our Urgent Need with Relationships

Many of our biggest problems are wrapped up in people. Often their need for affirmation and encouragement seems insatiable. Some are easily hurt, some are competitive, still others need recognition. We all know the excruciating pain of being misunderstood by those we love or friends we are trying to help.

Communication is one of the key challenges in marriage. A wife said to her husband, “We’re passing like ships in the night. You say you understand what you think I’m saying, but what you think you are hearing is not what I’m saying!”

And raising children to be mature adults with self-esteem is an awesome calling. It means riding out the storms of discipline, rebellion, and anguish. Sibling rivalry keeps many families on edge, even after the children are adults.

In the best of families, there are tensions when aging parents must be parented by their adult children through the difficult periods of declining health, nursing care, and an ever-increasing need for attention and time.

At work, we can trace most problems back to someone who’s the cause. Communication breaks down and so does efficiency. I met an office manager at the end of a stressful day who exclaimed, “People and computers! I’m ready to throw out both!”

Among our friends, we all have people with the “What have you done for me lately?” attitude. Then there are those who are facing real difficulties and we long to help bear the burdens they are carrying. It would be great if we could meet everyone’s needs!

In the church, there are times when fellow Christians get on our nerves. Every church has its share of difficult people who want to be served rather than to serve. There are unmet ego needs at the heart of many squabbles that keep the church from being the beloved community Jesus intended.

We wish we could see beneath the surface of people, understand their insecurities, and know what to say and do. Simply keeping our relationships in order is a full-time job, with overtime required most



every day, even many nights. We wonder if we have what it takes to deal with needy, demanding, frustrating people. A lot of the time we're sure we don't have the patience and endurance required. Who can help us find the love we need when we feel like we just don't have any more to give?

### Our Urgent Need with Ourselves

But not all of us are externalizers, who readily identify other people as our problems. Some of us are internalizers, who feel that our most formidable problems are with the person who lives inside our own skin. The *externalizer* tends to blame others; the *internalizer* blames himself or herself. If there is a problem, internalizers usually assume they caused it. A syndrome of low self-esteem, multiplied by memories of failures and mistakes, equals a deep sense of inadequacy.

Internalizers have a very active inner child, to use a term coined by psychology and the recovery movement. The same fears we had as children influence our adult lives. If we sensed as children that love and approval were dependent on our performance, we place similar conditions on ourselves in adulthood. The fears of our growing years become the settled condition of our attitudes toward ourselves. Fears of punishment, rejection, and alienation linger into adulthood.

There are three people living inside of internalizers—the ideal self, the performing self, and the punitive self. The punitive self often dominates by heaping blame for ineptness on the performing self and ridicule for the possibility of ever achieving on the ideal self. A pervading sense of guilt results. Guilt is a feeling of self-judgment. It's conditioned approval of ourselves, our capacity for self-evaluation gone sour. Sometimes it's rooted in specific memories of failure, but more often it's a floating dis-ease caused by dis-grace—uneasiness fostered by a lack of gracious acceptance of ourselves. It's the restless disapproval of ourselves that thrashes about in us looking for tangible evidence of our shortcomings.

A friend of mine who is an internalizer received a call from his boss setting up an appointment to talk over a problem. My friend

immediately assumed that he had either caused some problem or was the problem. He spent three anguishing days before the time of the appointment. When he did meet with the boss, he was greatly relieved to learn that the problem was related to a production schedule in the plant where he worked. Concluding the conference, his boss said, "I'm really glad I have a person like you to tackle and solve this problem."

Later my friend said to me, "When I think of all the worry and anxiety of those three days waiting for that appointment, I kick myself around the block for assuming I was the problem!" Notice how quickly my friend shifted from thinking he was the problem to punishing himself for the way he reacted. He was not able to enjoy the affirmation his boss had given him. Instead, he was critical of himself for expecting the worst.

**Who can infuse the esteem and confidence needed to stop worrying and start living?**

A woman with whom I was having a conversation persisted in giving herself a tongue-lashing for some failures. "You know, I sound just like my mother. I guess I've taken over where she left off." My response was, "Are you always this hard on yourself?" She said, "Well, someone has to keep me in line!"

Then I think of a man who always internalizes problems when they surface in his marriage. His wife says, "I wish he wasn't so quick to blame himself. He says, 'I'm sorry,' before we have a chance to talk out what went wrong. Point of fact, most often we're both to blame, but we never get to the real issue. He runs for cover by assuming the guilt and escapes any real responsibility for working out a solution."

Internalizers miss a lot of the joy of living. Who can infuse the esteem and confidence needed to stop worrying and start living?

### **Our Urgent Need with Decisions**

Decisions stare all of us in the face as well. Seemingly insignificant daily decisions about the expenditure of our time, energy, and

money can have long-range implications. Crossroad decisions about our careers, crucial moves, and lifestyle choices force us to think about where we are headed and the quality of person we want to be. Moral and social issues test our integrity.

We struggle to clarify our goals distracted by a cacophony of voices suggesting a thousand different directions. Some previous decisions soberly remind us that the margin of error is high. The risks make us very cautious. Sometimes we get bogged down and muddle through life, deciding not to decide but then paying the consequences.

We long to have 20/20 hindsight to learn from the past. Most of all, we wish we had better discernment about what's best for our lives and for those for whom we are responsible, especially loved ones in our care. We yearn to have someone share the burden with us and lead us to make the right decisions. But who has enough wisdom to do that? Whom can we trust?

### **Our Urgent Need with Life's Disappointments**

Along with people problems and tough decisions, life also dishes out disappointments. Little ones hassle our daily happiness and peace of mind. Big ones hamper our long-range hopes for the future.

In one week recently, I talked to people who represented the broad spectrum of human disappointments. A man expressed his anguish at being bypassed for a position he'd worked hard to be awarded. Only two people at the office disagreed with his assessment: the boss and his fellow employee who got the promotion. A woman battled with disappointment over her two children who, as yet, shared neither her beliefs nor her values. A man expressed his exasperation over his son who turned down the opportunity to follow in his footsteps and take over the family business. An actress who had achieved some measure of fame and success confessed her disappointment that she had not had a chance to work for several years. A man who also is out of work shared his growing anxiety and diminished self-esteem. People who had debilitating illnesses talked about their disappointment over their physical limitations. A woman sobbed out the pain over her broken relationship with her husband.

“Quite a week!” you say. And yet, people are enduring disappointments all around us. The Scottish poet Robert Burns was right: “If each man’s internal care were written on his brow, those who have our envy, would have our pity now.” All of us, at times, are disappointed.

When life doesn’t turn out the way we’ve planned, we tend to get discouraged and angry. When the anger builds up inside, we feel depressed and are not sure what to do about it. Where can we turn to receive comfort and counsel in our hour of trial?

Even in the midst of a busy life surrounded by people, often we feel quite lonely. Does anyone really care about *me*? We are anxious about trying to do the best we can with what we have and receiving recognition for it. Fear of failure often racks us, especially when we face new challenges and responsibilities at work and at home. An even greater fear of rejection keeps our exterior highly polished, while—at the same time—we hide what’s really going on inside. Can we trust anyone to understand our deepest fears and insecurities?



**We need someone to listen and understand—someone who will allow us to talk until we know what we are trying to say.**

All of this can happen to good people, religious people, church people, who discover that life is difficult. There’s an aching need for strength, courage, and confidence. Inner certainty and serenity are lacking. Religion begins to wear thin. Vibrant hope starts to dim. Something important is missing. But to whom shall we go to find the missing piece of the puzzle?

We need someone to listen and understand—someone who will allow us to talk until we know what we are trying to say. And we need someone who will probe to the nub of the issue, who has the authority and wisdom to help us see any confusion in our thinking or distortions in our emotions. This someone not only needs to lead us to the truth about ourselves and our lives, but also must possess the strength to empower us to act on what we know we must do and be. Above all, we need someone who has the power to heal our painful memories, sharpen our vision of what is best for our

future, and catch us up in a purpose beyond ourselves—one that's big enough to fire our imaginations and give ultimate meaning and lasting joy to daily living.

That's a tall order. No friend, psychiatrist, psychologist, pastor, or spiritual advisor can meet all of these qualifications. But they may help lead us to the One Who has all these gifts. He alone has the omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence to be the kind of counselor we need. He can help us with our problems, relationships, and decisions, for He knows everything. He is with us always, for He never sleeps. He has all power to give us strength and courage, for He is the Holy Spirit with us and wants to live within us.