



Resident or President?

Dwight Moody, one of this country's most stirring evangelists, was not known as an erudite scholar. Growing up a poor, fatherless farm boy, Moody accepted Christ at age 17 while working in a shoe store in Boston. Unfortunately, he was denied church membership because he was "not sufficiently instructed in Christian doctrine." Undeterred, Moody moved to Chicago and started up a Sunday School ministry that reached out to the ragamuffins of the city and in turn their parents, growing rapidly until the numbers were in the thousands.

Even with such an obvious pastoral calling, Moody was not a silver-tongued speaker and often received advice from the "learned" imploring him to keep silent; he simply made too many grammatical errors. Once, when Moody was being considered as a speaker for a revival campaign in England, an elderly Anglican pastor protested, "Why do we need this Mr. Moody? He's uneducated. He's inexperienced. Yet, listening to some of you talk, you'd think Mr. Moody had a monopoly on the Holy Spirit?"

The room grew silent. Then another pastor spoke. "No, Mr. Moody doesn't have a monopoly on the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit sure has a monopoly on Mr. Moody!"

Does the Holy Spirit have a Monopoly on you? Does he own Park Place and Boardwalk and all four railroads? Does he claim sole possession of every utility, every house, every hotel, right down to that little silver doggie and funny looking shoe?

Painful as it is, I have to admit that I sometimes opt for a fair trade agreement, and find myself buying into the world's values and priorities. It's as if I forget that I have God living inside me and make ugly, selfish choices, say rude things and bustle through life with impatience, frustration and too large an ego. The Holy Spirit is a resident in my life, but he's not always the President. So, I've been pondering how I can grow to let him monopolize me more. Here's what I've discovered so far.

I believe that to live in full surrender to the Holy Spirit, you must begin each day in prayer. Don't worry, this doesn't have to be a long prayer—you can do that in the afternoon—the kind I'm talking about is a "tuning prayer." I try to pray this prayer before I get out of bed, but if I forget, I am reminded of my negligence when I tune my car radio or change the channel on my TV. I immediately turn off the noise pollution, realign my priorities and tune my antennae heavenward. My prayer goes something like this:

Holy Spirit, I want you to monopolize my life today. Be my guide. Open my ears to hear your voice, my heart to receive your message and my body to carry out your will.

The Bible promises, "When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). This is great news. We have a guide to all truth! But a guide is no good if we're couch potatoes. Unless we pick up our feet and walk with our guide, we're going to get lost.

When we choose the Holy Spirit as our guide, we concede that we can't put much faith in these earthly bodies. We need divine input. But how do we get it? Well, sometimes the Holy Spirit gently nudges your soul. Sometimes he shouts at you through a Holy megaphone. But I know of only one true formula for consistently hearing his voice. We must be familiar—and I mean cozy, dog-eared, bedside-table familiar—with his instruction book, the Bible. Unless we are firmly submerged in the guidebook, it's easy to get off track. But you can bet your life that if the prompting you are feeling matches what you are reading, you are hearing from your guide. Get off the couch and follow his lead.

When you keep your prayers rising up and your nose in the good book, choices become easier to make. It becomes clear that there is only one market worth buying into. There's only One you can trust, and he wants a monopoly on you. □

—Susan Reedy

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