

After attending a funeral a group of friends reflected on the things various people had said to eulogize the deceased. One of them waxed philosophical and started a conversation about what they would like to have people say in eulogizing them. After several had offered their ideas of what they would most like to be said about them, one very realistic and honest chap said, "I'd like someone to say, 'Look! He moved!'"

When speaking about the Holy Spirit some people have made remarks that are very curious. Such comments may display sloppy theology or incorrect doctrine. Neither is acceptable when speaking of the other Comforter sent to walk alongside us.

One of the most common expressions regarding the Holy Spirit relates to His alleged "movement." After an inspirational or convicting time of corporate worship it is not uncommon to hear someone exclaim, "The Spirit really moved today." People will petition God in prayer, asking that the Spirit will move among His people.

This language is curious to me, as is the underlying concept from which it springs. My search for such terminology in the Bible produced scant results — actually only one (the NIV at Lk. 2:27). None, however, seems to parallel the use we are discussing. Not only is the language foreign to Scripture, so far as I can see, but the foundational idea that He somehow responds to man is the reverse of what we see in Scripture, where man responds to Him — His leading, His convicting, etc.

When visiting a zoo people will do many interesting things to coax an animal to move. When the animal doesn't move, the crowd moves to the next cage. But they are drawn back when someone cries in excitement, "It's moving!"

That is apparently how many people regard the Holy Spirit. Except they treat Him, not as a Person, but as an impersonal force that is active only when conditions are right — conditions created, in fact, by men. They go to church and are elated when the Spirit "moves" and disappointed when He doesn't. It is as if we are waiting for Him to do something and that we must somehow coax Him. Many times His alleged movement corresponds to the emotional appeal of the music or the fervor of the

preaching. This seems to portray the Holy Spirit as somehow being in subjection to human stimulation.

Is there ever a time when the Holy Spirit is not active? His testimony and revelation — the Bible — is "living and active" (Heb. 4:12). Does the Holy Spirit lie dormant and inactive until awakened by man's emotional stimulation? Is He negatively implicated in our emotionless and lifeless rituals? Or is it true that we are the ones He is hoping to move; that He is the One trying to coax us to move? Movement we witness is actually that of people responding to the Holy Spirit when they are convicted by sin and inspired to action.

Other phrases bantered about are equally curious and strange. People say, "I felt the presence of the Holy Spirit." Where in Scripture did anyone feel the Holy Spirit or His presence? In describing an especially inspirational atmosphere some will say, "The Spirit was present today." Really?! Is there a place we may escape His presence? Not according to the Psalmist (Ps. 139:7).

Maybe I'm being too picky. Perhaps this is much ado about nothing. Is it sufficient to say, "Well, you know what I mean?" Or should we take greater care in how we express ourselves knowing that careless words can lead to sloppy theology, which results in false doctrine that leads people away from God to an eternity separated from Christ?

Is the presentation of thought regarding God worthy of great care and accuracy in the very words we employ? Should it not concern us that careless language will give birth to false teaching and the perversion of the Holy Spirit's revelation of God's will?

It is a sound principle to use Bible words and to use them the way the Bible uses them. One who is intent upon expressing Bible truth as clearly as possible will be meticulous in selecting Bible words. The catch phrases invented by men must be avoided in favor of Bible terminology.



Curious things people say about the Holy Spirit

by
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