



DEHYDRATED

The danger of dehydrated faith

By Brian White

Running is one of my hobbies. I'm not a great runner; I'm not even good enough to call myself an amateur. You could time me with a calendar. But along the way I've learned a few things about running and sweating.

For example, experienced runners know how important it is to stay hydrated: all that sweat needs to be replaced so your body can continue to function well. But when I first started running, I didn't know that I needed to drink a lot of water even on days when I didn't run. Sometimes I didn't drink enough; I was sweating it out but I wasn't taking it in and I was getting dehydrated.

The funny thing was that my body was craving liquid but I didn't feel thirsty. And that's dangerous because dehydration can kill you.

THE SYMPTOMS OF DEHYDRATION

A medical encyclopedia I consulted lists five symptoms of physical dehydration:

- Disorientation
- Restlessness

- Irritability
- Apathy
- Dry eyes

Thirst is not listed as a symptom; a person who urgently needs water might not know he or she is physically dehydrated. This is true of spiritual dehydration as well.

Jesus said, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water'" (John 7:37,38, NASB). When Jesus spoke these words about the Holy Spirit, He was issuing an everlasting invitation to every thirsty human being: "Come to Me and drink."

But what we know about physical dehydration teaches us that spiritually dehydrated people might not feel thirsty for the Holy Spirit's rivers of living water. In our spiritual lives, we desperately need the Holy Spirit's presence and power. But we might be too disoriented to know it, too restless to wait for Him, too irritable and grumpy to join with others who are thirsty, too apathetic to care about the lost and the broken, and too dry-

eyed to weep in personal repentance or in response to the pain of others.

Runners know we don't always recognize our need for life-giving water; sometimes we're too busy running the race to notice we're all dried out. It is often up to other runners to let a fellow competitor know he is not sweating, that his system is dry and that he is in danger.

A WARNING FROM AN EXPERIENCED RUNNER

A.W. Tozer ran a good race. In 1950, he tried to warn his fellow runners that they were spiritually dehydrated, that they had ignored Christ's command to come and drink of the Holy Spirit, that they were attempting to run the race without His presence and power, and that they could eventually run to their own spiritual deaths. In *The Divine Conquest*, Tozer took the evangelical church to task for neglecting the doctrine of the Holy Spirit "to a point where we virtually deny Him His place in the Godhead."¹

Tozer explains that "... this denial has not been by open doctri-

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nal statement, for we have clung closely enough to the Biblical position wherever our credal pronouncements are concerned. Our formal creed is sound; *the breakdown is in our working creed.* This is not a trifling distinction. A doctrine has practical value only as far as it is *prominent in our thoughts and makes a difference in our lives.* By this test the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as held by evangelical Christians today has almost no practical value at all. In most Christian churches, the Spirit is quite entirely overlooked. Whether He is present or absent makes no real difference to anyone. Brief reference is made to Him. ... Further than that He might as well not exist.” (Emphases in original.)

Before my Pentecostal readers give in to the urge to join Tozer in castigating the noncharismatic, evangelical church at large for downplaying and disregarding the presence, the Person, and the power of the Holy Spirit, let me ask my Pentecostal brothers and sisters a few important questions I have been asking about my own life:

- How abundant is the fruit of the Spirit in your life?
- When was the last time you saw someone receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit?
- When was the last time you prayed for someone to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit?
- Which gifts of the Holy Spirit flow through you on a

regular basis at home, at work and in the church?

- Do you pray at all times in the Spirit?

I belong to a congregation where the Holy Spirit is frequently mentioned and where the pastor encourages people to pray for the Baptism. But my pastor’s desire cannot keep me or my church from dehydrating. If we don’t drink, we will die.

Tozer says a man can starve knowing all about bread; similarly, we can dehydrate knowing all about the water of the Spirit. If the church of today dehydrates, the church of tomorrow will be left without power, unable to fulfill its mission, easy prey to the enemy.

WHAT WILL THEY DO WITHOUT HIM?

Two recent experiences have provoked me to pray for the next generation.

The first happened when a bright young man who is preparing for ministry told me he had given up on the gifts of the Spirit. When I asked him to explain why, he replied, “The previous generation talked about the Holy Spirit and His gifts, but they had no power. They were ineffective and they did nothing but antagonize my generation, so I decided that people who say they rely on the Holy Spirit’s presence and gifts are doomed to be irrelevant.”

His comment chilled my blood.

In so many of our ministry efforts we have relied upon human wisdom, human personalities and human creativity instead of on the power of God. This is a recipe for dryness, and dryness is what some of our most insightful young people have seen in their churches — professional, clever, unctious attempts at inviting the lost to have an encounter with a church rather than an encounter with the living God.

A second experience was equally chilling. I was at a service where hundreds of young people came forward for special prayer. When asked if they had received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, not even 10 percent raised their hands.

If we as individuals and congre-

gations are presently dehydrated, running foolishly on as if the Holy Spirit did not exist, we are dooming our children and grandchildren to spiritual failure.

Tozer says that doctrine is dynamite and that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is buried dynamite: Unless the Spirit of God is given sufficient emphasis, the truths we know about Him will remain buried in the backs of our minds, unused, unexploded, impractical. This could happen to believers in Pentecostal churches as well as in non-Pentecostal churches. If a person doesn’t come and drink, dehydration is the inevitable result, whatever the name on the church sign says.

Are you thirsty for the Holy Spirit’s presence and power?

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PARQUETS

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IF YOU ARE THIRSTY

If you are thirsty and want to drink deeply from the Holy Spirit's rivers of living water, here are some essential steps to take whether you have been baptized in the Holy Spirit previously or not:

- Come to Jesus in repentance, surrender and prayer. Jesus is the One who immerses us in the Holy Spirit.
- Ask for the fullness of the Holy Spirit to be released in your life. Pray that God will pour out His Spirit in and through you. Ask for everything God has for you.
- Ask again. Wait as long as it takes. Let God know you mean business. And let God do whatever business He needs to do in you to get you ready and to make you a fit vessel.
- Begin removing all obstacles between you and God. Be ruthless about this.
- Ask others to pray with and for you until you receive.

DRINK DEEPLY TODAY

Many are indeed desperately thirsty but don't know it because they're spiritually dehydrated. They exhibit all the symptoms but are unaware of their deep need, sensing no thirst at all, perhaps even feeling completely satisfied. Perhaps they attend church and have learned many things about the Spirit of God; perhaps they were once filled to overflowing. But knowing how to drink quenches no one's thirst; and remembering a deep drink from long ago will not stave off dehydration today.

Only those who are pres-

"KNOWING HIM COMES ONLY BY A PERSONAL ENCOUNTER WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT HIMSELF."

A.W. TOZER

ently partaking of the Holy Spirit are presently out of danger. According to Tozer, "We dare not conclude that because we learn about the Spirit we for that reason actually know Him. Knowing Him comes only by a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit himself."

I must ask you what I am also asking myself: Are you personally encountering the Holy Spirit of God in your daily life? Do you know Him or do you merely know about Him? Is He alive and moving in power in your heart and in your church, or have you decided you can live without Him?

The symptoms of spiritual dehydration might have masked your desperate thirst. Come to Jesus today, and drink. **tpe**

1. All references from A.W. Tozer, *The Divine Conquest*, pp. 65-68.

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E-mail your comments to tpe@ag.org.

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June 1 – Dottie Hillard
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June 8 – Tilly Walz
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June 22 – Karen Olander H. Stanton, Calif.
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June 29 – Lenore Kotsur
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July 6 – Loren Hicks
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