

River Dwellers Book Report

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Dr. Robert Reimer writes a fascinating book to explain how one can dwell in the River to enjoy the Holy Spirit. I was impacted by the analogies to explain the concepts. For example, being baptized with the Spirit is like ocean waves. “The baptism of the Spirit should be like waves crashing up onto the shores. It is an ongoing series of events, encounters, and fillings” (Reimer, 26). This analogy helped me picture this new teaching. The book also helped me recognize that I have misdiagnosed my spiritual hunger for a long time. At various times, I felt restless, bored, and empty, but I would channel that to playing or watching sports, video games, and board games. I missed the Holy Spirit’s invitation. “When spiritual hunger strikes, go to God. Embrace that empty feeling, and run to the River of Life where everything lives” (Reimer, 108). The book also helped me identify disappointments. “These disappointments that stack up are like twists in the river bend.... The problem with these twists in the river bend is many people don’t make the turn” (Reimer, 152-153). Prior, I believed I should not waste my time dwelling on them. But Reimer helped to give voice to them and the heartache I had.

The ministry I am a part of minimizes the role of the Holy Spirit. This teaching will help to introduce dwelling in the River. First, it would be helpful to explain what “baptism of the Spirit” means and how it differs from receiving the Spirit. Receiving the Spirit is the moment of salvation when one believes in Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit comes into and seals the believer’s life (Ephesians 1:13). The baptism of the Spirit or filling of the Spirit or a second blessing is when one encounters the Holy Spirit in a radical and life-altering moment when the Holy Spirit saturates Himself in the person. Reimer explains, “the baptism of the Spirit is God’s ultimate purpose for his people... He saved us so He could fill us so full of Himself we could have intimacy with Him, we could become more like Him, and we could change the world with Him” (Reimer, 25). A helpful illustration is Jesus’ contrast of being

baptized with the Spirit with John's baptism with water (Acts 1:5). Baptism with water had the idea of being completely dunked, submersed, and soaked in water. Likewise, baptism with the Spirit is wholly saturated, filled, and drenched by the Holy Spirit.

Second, I would address their misconceptions, like baptism was only for the apostles. Peter quotes the Prophet Joel to explain that God pours out his Spirit on Christ-followers. The "last days" refers to the time of Jesus' resurrection until the second coming. During the "last days," God has promised to "pour out my Spirit on all people" (Acts 2:17). Another misconception is that baptism of the Holy Spirit happens only once. Reimer explains it well with the analogy of continuous ocean waves. The results of the second blessing are being a bold witness, having the power to heal, experiencing God's love, and gaining a prophetic voice.

Third, I would consider obstacles to remaining in God's presence. Reimers states, "we cannot live in the River with a heart that has become attracted to many things and is distracted from our first love" (Reimer, 88). Our hearts find attachments with success, power, pleasure, comfort, and money, but those cause more restlessness. "This is why people become addicted to things. They keep returning to the empty and broken cistern hoping to find living water there that will satisfy their deep longing. They end up ensnared – ever thirsty, but never satisfied. We try to borrow life from things which cannot give life" (Reimer, 89). God invites us to cultivate His presence in three ways. The omnipresence of God is reassuring, but will often not satisfy the restlessness. The manifest presence of God is where He reveals Himself tangibly and clearly. You cannot miss it like Elijah and the showdown with the Baal prophets or Moses and the burning bush. This surely satisfies our souls. It also is crucial to develop God's cultivated presence, as we cannot make God reveal Himself. Another helpful illustration was walking in the woods with animals and birds. Most of us are completely unaware of what the animals are

doing or the sounds they are making. But if you became a wildlife student, you would hear their unique sounds because you have come to know what to look for and listen for. Reimer concludes, “Nothing in the woods has changed. The woods are the same as they were before, but you have changed. You have become attentive to the reality of the birds in the woods. It is the same with practicing the presence of God” (Reimer, 94).

Fourth, I would encourage to stop being religious, but to feed our souls. Sadly, the church has learned to be religious rather than actually experience God’s presence to be satisfied. Many churchgoers can do the right activities, like going to church, reading the Bible, and serving, but miss the point of enjoying Jesus, which makes it merely religion. Instead, the point of spiritual disciplines is to “feed your soul and increase your awareness of the Lord’s presence” (Reimer, 102). Since we are all different, we should press into the ones that nourish us.

I believe this book can be healing, life-giving, and transformative to my ministry. I have a few people who left the church due to seeing Christianity as a religion. To investigate the promise that Jesus offers streams of living water is staggering, but perplexing, because they have not seen it. Explaining what is being filled with the Holy Spirit will be very helpful. A foundation of understanding can then fan into flames to take a step of faith in obedience. Then I believe people will experience being in the River. Afterward, we can explore the other components of being Spirit-filled, like prophecy, which may initially be off-putting to others.

Through *River Dwellers*, I was introduced to many concepts about the Holy Spirit that were eye-opening and refreshing. The book helped me make sense of certain experiences I had, like spiritual hunger and disappointment, but I did not know how to process or engage them. I come away with a sense of hope, a lifestyle that acknowledges my hurt, and a God who wants me to come as I am, rather than how I ought to be.

With integrity, I have read this book: **thoroughly and entirely — 100%**

Bibliography

Reimer, Rob. *River Dwellers: Living in the Fullness of the Spirit*. Franklin, TN: Carpenters Son Publishing, 2015.