

The story goes that when George Washington Carver was asking God to show him the mysteries of the universe, God said, "Let me show you the mysteries of the peanut; that's more your size!"

When I thought of this the other day I considered how we as Christians might say in a similar way, "Lord, give me a big dose of your Spirit." And He would say very gently, "Here is a drop for you to sniff, for that's all you can handle!"

We get to thinking that we are pretty spiritual when we pray every day and maybe teach a class in Sunday School. But though God is pleased with such attention, He knows that we are a very limited and crude vessel for carrying such a precious cargo. We may think that we should have gotten the ten talents (Matthew 25:14ff), when we really can handle only one talent very well.

We are so sinful and far from Him, and yet the Spirit is so powerful that a little goes a long way. Jesus told us in Matthew 17:20 that if we had faith as small as a mustard seed we could move mountains. Even a mustard seed's worth looks to be too much for us to handle. Something even smaller may be more our size.

God has to give us a dose we can handle. C.S. Lewis once wrote: 'The truth is, I haven't any language weak enough to depict the weakness of my spiritual life. If I weakened it enough it would cease to be language at all. As when you try to turn the gasring a little lower still, and it merely goes out'. I hate to think of myself as on the borderline of being able to accept God's Spirit, but I feel a similar inadequacy to receive the power of God.

But God has the power to transform us into a more suitable vessel. Think about whether Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:7-3:3) or John (Revelation 10:8-10) were ready for the scrolls that God gave them to eat. These doses of the Spirit were sweet as honey (though John records that it turned his stomach sour) and they gave the recipients the power to preach the Word of God. Elisha was ready to expand his capability when he took over for Elijah (2 Kings 2:9): he asked for a double dose!

Just think what we could do if we could hold more of God's spirit! I'm not talking about such that we could perform healing miracles, but the power to show people the Goodness of God. This means that we have to perform a miracle on our own attitudes. As Phillip Yancey asks, is it more of a miracle to heal the physical limitations of a quadraplegic or to produce the powerful heart of a Joni Earickson?

This power can't be bought, as Simon the Sorcerer found out (Acts 8:18). Just being in the presence of Christ may not be enough either, for the apostles were with Him every day but had to be rebuked for being able to carry so little faith in their hearts (Matthew 8:26, Matthew 17:20). We must find a way to be able to absorb it. This particularly applies to our ability to accept the true message of God, that is, what He really wants from us.

Paul talked about the fact that we are vessels in 2 Timothy 2:20-21:

*But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.*

The question is, how much of God's Spirit can we hold? We don't want to "quench the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19). We need to try to expand our capacity, but realize that we can't hold it all in this present life. We must accept the bit that God is willing to give us, just as George Washington Carver accepted the peanut as his assignment. And with God's help he found many ways for this lowly plant to benefit mankind.