

(John - Part 51): How to Cultivate the Holy Spirit's Presence

by A.W. Tozer

To cultivate the Holy Spirit's companionship, we must give up all for the All, agree on direction, destination, and route with the Holy Spirit, and live a holy life.

Duration: 40:38

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 14:16, Romans 8:9, Galatians 5:22

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher initially planned to continue his series on the book of John but discovered a great interest in the topic of the Holy Spirit. He decided to divide the sermon and focus on the Holy Spirit's companionship in the next session. The preacher emphasized the importance of surrendering to the Spirit of God and cultivating a oneness with Him. He compared this oneness to a young couple needing to have common interests and a shared outlook in order to walk together voluntarily. The preacher encouraged the congregation to seek a deep relationship with the Holy Spirit and allow Him to guide and transform their lives.

Transcript

You will remember that I have been speaking on the book of John and I've gotten to the 14th chapter and then we got to the 16th verse and then I discovered the great interest that was being taken in the subject of the Holy Spirit and I began giving sermons on the Holy Spirit and I find that I must speak tonight again on the Holy Spirit, but I'm not going to be able to finish tonight. I thought I would, but I'm going to finish and give the second part of the sermon on how to cultivate the Spirit's companionship next Sunday night. I don't promise that'll be the last of the series on the Spirit, but I think it will be.

I thought tonight would be, but we are not all here and I would like to, if God will, finish this and I don't feel as if I want to do it tonight, so I'm going to divide it and talk about this same thing tomorrow, I mean, next Sunday night. Now, I will pray the Father, said Jesus, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever. Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.

But ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you. We are like a man who owns a property, a little poor, scrubby field, and he works it year in and

year out, and he gets barely enough to keep himself alive off of this little field.

But unknown to him, or at least he is disregarding this, if he knows it or ever knew it, that underneath his little farm there is oil, and that if he would only go down and reach the oil, he could forget all those little scrubby undersized tomatoes and those tiny little worm-eaten potatoes. He could have riches that would put him on the finest avenue in the finest section of any city and let him drive a Cadillac and own property in Florida. But he is satisfied to grub in the dirt of a little farm that won't produce.

The Christians are like that today. There is oil, but we don't know it. And so we are half-starved sheep, nibbling over the burnt-out and eaten-over fields and trying to grub with our fingers to get a little crop, but nothing comes of it.

Whereas if we only knew it and would dig down a little, we might have fountains of holy oil flowing that would enrich our lives, that would change everything. And instead of being Christians in poverty, we would be Christians with the very riches of God. And I said at the beginning of this series on the Spirit that we are being frightened, that we have been frightened about the Holy Spirit because we don't know who he is.

The Holy Spirit is God, acting like God, being himself God. Always he is God, and whatever God would do, that the Spirit does, that and nothing else. And always he is God with the same attributes as God, no more, no less, the same attributes as God.

He is God the Spirit, as Jesus is God the Son, and the Father is God the Father. He is God, and we have no more to be afraid of him than we have to be afraid of Jesus if he were to walk into our midst. And he is a personality, and because he is a personality, he can be cultivated.

One of the mistakes we make is that one experience of being filled with the Spirit is sufficient, and that is enough. It is as much as to say that I meet and shake hands with somebody and that that is sufficient, that is all. That would be true if that man were a lamppost or a tree, but being a personality, that man is capable of cultivation right on to the end of his life.

I can know him better every day to the end of his life if he is worthy of my knowledge and I am worthy of his. The Holy Spirit, being a personality, cannot be known in one encounter. He must be cultivated.

And I want to talk about how to cultivate the Holy Spirit's companionship, and yet I confess that I wonder whether we are all ready for this or not. I doubt that some are. I think there are some that are not ready for a sermon on how to cultivate the Spirit's companionship for a number of reasons that I want to give you now.

One is that they are not willing to give up all for the All. If you spell the first All in lowercase letters and then put the second All in capital letters, you have it. You must give up the All for the All.

The All is the Holy Ghost. The All is Jesus Christ the Trinity. The All is God.

But there are so many things that are plural. There is a singular All that is God. Then there are the plural All, the things, the everything, the plural.

The world is full of pluralities, of many things, of a variety of things, and we fall in love with these things, these variety of things. And we get lost in plural, whereas God is bringing us slowly to singular, the one singular to God. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, Trinity, the three in one.

And God is bringing us to this one. Now we're forgetting that, and we're holding on to the plurals, to the many, and forgetting the one. We will not give up these All things in order that we might have the All, which is not things, but All, God.

I'm sure there are some like that. We turn our faith two ways at once. We face both directions, and we think that we can get something of the world and something of God, and that by walking the tightrope or the fence in between, we'll manage to have a little of earth and a little of heaven.

And as we get older, we hope to shift a little and get more of heaven and less of earth, until finally we tinker out and when we're about ready to die, we'll have all of heaven and none of earth. That's the way we've got it figured, and that's why some people never strike oil, why they never know the riches that lie in Jesus Christ for them, and why they're never filled with the Spirit, because they're satisfied to have a little of this world and a little of the world above, and will never quite say that final surrender and give up all to get the All. And then there are a lot of Christians, and I don't mean modernists now, so don't lean back and comfortably try to apply this to somebody else.

There are a lot of Christians that want Christianity for its insurance value, just as they want any other kind of insurance for the value. There are those who believe in hell, and they want to miss it. They believe in heaven, and they want to gain it.

They believe in the reality of their sin, and they want to escape the consequences of their sins. And they want to be guaranteed that when they die, there will be a safe heaven for them to go to. And so Christianity seems to be the only way, so they get Christianity for its insurance value.

If I accept Christ, that guarantees that I will go to heaven, that I won't go to hell, and that it will be all right with my soul finally. And so Christianity becomes an insurance policy. And who wouldn't for a value like that? Who wouldn't pay their insurance policy? And a lot of people are willing to support the Church regularly and even generously, and support their religion generously because they consider it for its insurance value.

And they're even willing to go along and be a little bit inconvenienced by it. Who wouldn't be inconvenienced by an insurance policy if they knew that it was a very valuable tool? So we're willing to stop some certain things and do certain other things, and we're willing to change our lives a little bit, but not basically, just a little bit on the surface. But Christianity is for its insurance value mainly.

And then there are those who are not ready for this because their conception of religion is social and not spiritual. I think I said something like that this morning. But they have watered down the strong line of the New Testament until it barely has any taste in it at all.

And they're easygoing, and they introduce their own easygoing opinion into it. And Christianity becomes one verse of Scripture plus two verses out of my own head, and three verses out of a newspaper, and four verses out of an almanac, and five verses out of a book I've read, and something that my Aunt Minnie told me, and something that the woman next door believes. And so there's a hodgepodge with a little of God and not very much of God, and not much of Scripture.

Well, religion has a value. You know, they blame us, we Christians. They say that the Church has people coming to it because it's the only social, the only place where they can meet socially.

They say that they tell us that there are those who have no social standing anywhere, and no social core or center where they can gather. And they find it in the Church. And I think there's some truth in that, that a lot of churches exist for their social value.

I know it must be true because churches without any religion at all who do not believe the Bible, and do not believe in Christ the Savior, and do not believe in God in any proper definitive sense of the word, yet nevertheless manage to carry on and build educational buildings and have high church steeples, and have thousands and hundreds of thousands of dollars coming into their coffers every year to keep up a social center where their lives can be enriched socially. And that's about all. Well, you can't say to anybody like that, how to be filled with the Holy Spirit, or how to cultivate the Spirit's acquaintance, because people like that come to church for the social value of the Church.

There's where the young fellow meets the girl, there's where the girl meets possibly a young man, and there's where old cronies meet, and there's where they meet and discuss their golf, and there's where they meet and discuss politics, and there's where old ladies meet and discuss who's engaged to whom and who's going to have a baby, and whether this fellow is leaving his wife or not, and all that stuff. It's the social center where the little religion longs. And you say, that isn't true of our church.

You'd be surprised how many people come here for no higher reason than that, sir. You'd be surprised if God Almighty would have turned the x-ray on our hearts. You'd be surprised how many are just like that.

Well, and then there are some people that are, I have accepted Christ, they say, and they're fundamental in their faith. But there's no use to preach to them about how to cultivate the Spirit's acquaintance or how to be filled with the Spirit, because they're more influenced by Hollywood than they are by Jerusalem. They're more influenced by movie magazines than they are by the Scriptures in their dress, in their looks, in the way they decorate their physiognomy, in their language, in everything.

It's not funny. And in everything they're more like Hollywood and Broadway than they are like God's people. Brethren, you can't talk to people like that about the Holy Spirit.

I don't care if they carry a Scofield Bible as big as the trunk in the rear of your automobile. They're still not Christians in any fine sense of the word, because they've never let God do anything to them. They've never let him change them any.

They've never let any transformation take place. They've accepted him, they say, but that's about all there is to it. Now, some people would like to be spiritual for the thrill it would give them.

Americans love thrills, and they get thrilled with some kind. I've often wondered why women will follow the soap operas on the radio or television through year after year, mounting one year on another. And all of those soap operas are like I've listened to them in order to find out what it was all about and have a kind of a sour laugh at their expense.

And I know that they're always having difficulties, as if there weren't real troubles enough in the world that we have to pay a lot for a radio and for a television set in order to introduce imaginary troubles and keep us all stirred up. And some people haven't wept an honest tear for anybody in distress, but they'll weep and blow their nose while there's somebody sitting at a desk somewhere in the studio, make them believe they're in trouble because John's other wife has come down with a tizzy. Or something else.

That's an old name for asthma in case you didn't know. Well, my brethren, why is it that we have to go out and invite imaginary troubles when everybody's in trouble all around about us? And Jesus Christ didn't come into the world to listen to imaginary troubles. He came into the world to save us out of real troubles.

And if we Christians were what we ought to be, it would be the real troubles that matter. Billy Sunday told him back there in his day, he said, some of you old babies, you haven't wept over the lost and you haven't wept over the distressed and the poor, for God knows when. But you'll go down to the opera and wet your beautiful gloves with your tears weeping over some old gal that's not in any difficulty, but is pretending she is and taking a part in it.

He had something there, and the same thing is true today. I wonder why that is. I don't know why, but we want thrills.

We just want thrills. People want to be thrilled somehow or other. American people want to get a thrill.

And there are those who want to be filled with the Holy Spirit and know the Holy Spirit for its thrill value. And we want religion for its thrill value. And about all that's said of religion in the secular magazine is it's either it's peace or it's thrill, like Ovaltine.

You know, Ovaltine is called the Swiss pick-up drink. That is, if you're a little low, drink a glass of Ovaltine and you'll go zooming right off jet propel. But on the other hand, if you can't sleep, drink a little Ovaltine and just soothe you like a mother soothing her baby.

It works that way. It works two ways. It has two edges on it.

It puts you to sleep if you're nervous and wakes you up if you're sluggish. That's an amazing thing. And religion is about the same.

The religion in this country, they're offering tours in great hunks now. You can get it anywhere, dirt cheap, and it'll comfort you if you're in trouble or it'll pick you up if you're feeling a little low. God's Ovaltine sent down to pick us up when we're down and put us down when we're up.

A lot of people like to be filled with the Holy Spirit so they can have something like that. You want the thrill of it, but you don't want the holiness of it. You want the joy of it, but you don't want the purity of it.

The spiritual life, I mean. I never refer to the Holy Ghost as it. I refer sometimes to the condition of being filled with the Spirit as it, as a condition.

The Holy Spirit himself is not an it, he's a he. He's being one with the persons of the triune God. Well, for that reason, you see, people can have no sympathetic understanding of what I've been saying, Paul, but I'm going to assume at least that there are some who can.

And I want to talk about how to cultivate the Spirit's acquaintance. I think I'd better take a text, and it's found over here in the third of Amos. It'll do for what's left of tonight, and it'll do for a full sermon next Sunday night.

Can two walk together except they be agreed? Amos 3.3. Can two walk together except they be agreed? Now that, of course, is a rhetorical question, and the answer is implied in the question. The answer, of course, is no. Can two walk together except they be agreed? And the answer is no.

Now, if two are going to walk together, there are going to have to be some major points of agreement. They're going to have to agree on their direction. If I say I'm going to walk a certain distance, Vance Havner said that walking was his only un-American activity.

And if you and I are going to walk, I'd say, I'm going to walk today. And you say, I'm going to walk today. Couldn't we walk together? And I say, it depends on whether we're going the same way.

Well, you say, I'm going to walk east. And I say, I'm sorry, but I'm walking west. You can't walk together unless you can agree on which way you're walking, isn't that right? And so we can't walk to the Holy Ghost unless we're agreed that we're going to walk the way he walked and go the direction he's going to go.

And in order to agree and walk together, we've got not only the direction but the destination. It's entirely possible to reach China by going east, but it's also possible to reach China by going west. It all depends, of course, on which way you'd rather do it.

Some of our missionaries sail from the west coast in order to get, say, to India, and others sail from the east coast and go over and into the Mediterranean and down and around that way to India. They've got to have a destination and say, Now, I'm going to that same place, that same destination. Well, if two people are going to walk together, they're going to have to agree on the destination.

And if we can't agree on that, then we can't walk together. And we've got to agree on which path to take. If I said I'm going to go to New York or to Chester, Pennsylvania, if anybody wanted to go there, but if I said I'm going to Chester, Pennsylvania, well, now there are four or five ways to get there.

I suppose maybe there are twelve ways to get there. And if we're going to go there together, we're going to have to agree on one route, because the one of twelve. We're going to have to agree on one route and say, We're going to stick together.

We're going to have to go on that same route, not choose a different one. And then we're going to have to agree that it's to our advantage to go together. There are persons who say, any two persons you might think of, that it wouldn't be good for them to go together, others it would.

And so we're going to have to say now, can two persons walk together? Well, they're going to have to agree on destination, direction, route, and then whether they want to go together or not. A lot of good people just don't want to. And you're going to have to decide that.

You're going to have to decide whether you actually want to go the way Spirit goes. My friends, in all dead seriousness, I say to you tonight that the Spirit-filled way must be a holy way. It must be a holy way.

There are those who have no intention of cleaning up their lives, but they want the Spirit, and they'll wrestle all night to be filled with the Spirit. They'll wrestle their jaws and do all sorts of things to get filled with the Spirit, but they're not going to clean up their lives. They don't want a holy Spirit.

They want a holy Spirit. They want a holy Spirit with a thrill, but if you emphasize the holy, they back out on you. They want the thrill of being a Spirit-filled person, but they don't want the holy Spirit who makes the life holy.

A Spirit-filled life must be a holy life, for the Spirit of the Lord is sensitive, and he is not going to dwell in an unholy life, a life that loves sin. The man or the woman who loves sin can have it, but he'll never at the

same time have the companionship of the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit is a holy Spirit, and he makes the place holy where he dwells. He doesn't require a holy place to come in, but he requires that you be willing that that place should be holy.

After he comes in in the Spirit, the Scripture says, he makes the place of his feet glorious. And whatever that means, it must mean this, that wherever God lights down, that place becomes a glorious place, because the feet of God have come down there. He makes the place of his feet glorious, and if the Spirit of God comes into a heart, he's going to make that heart glorious.

Not dramatic, necessarily. We say, get filled with a Spirit that you may be widely known. Get filled with a Spirit that you may preach like Spurgeon.

Get filled with a Spirit that you may open continents like Livingstone. No, no, my brother. The Holy Ghost never yet came to a man to make him famous.

The Holy Ghost never yet came to a man to make a celebrity out of him. The Holy Ghost never came to a man to give him a reputation. The Spirit of God came to the man to make him holy, and to gift him and enable him to witness.

You may witness, as our friend Jim Drish, who I was talking about with some friends today, Jim Drish was not known out of Chicago. Jim Drish was scarcely known outside this church. If any man ever lived on this corner that was a spiritual man with Jim Drish, he walked with God and he was not where God took him.

And yet he had no wide reputation. He wasn't known abroad. He never did great things.

He walked humbly and lowly with his God until two trains smashed his car and killed him. God took him off to heaven. Brethren, God never comes to a man to make a big shot out of him.

Some of you want to be filled with a Spirit so you can be another Billy Graham. Some of you want to be filled with a Spirit so you can be another Earl Barry or another Livingstone. No.

You can only be filled with the Spirit if you are willing to be nobody, unheard of, unknown, walking in the quiet back ways of the world, in the shadow of other great men. You walk quietly in their shadows, they get the praise, and you get overlooked. Never be filled with the Spirit of God if we want to be filled with the Spirit in order that we might be somebody.

For the very desire to be a celebrity, the very desire for publicity, the very desire to be known abroad, the very desire to be great, cancels out all the work of God to destroy the flesh and make a man holy. No, my brother. They tell me that if I'm filled with the Spirit, I can preach like Spurgeon.

That's all wrong. Paul couldn't preach like Spurgeon. Paul admitted it.

Paul said, I have power, all right, and what I said. But I speak not with smooth, eloquent words, the plain, blunt language that anybody can understand. No, no.

He doesn't make you great, and he doesn't give you great preaching gifts necessarily. He might. But the greatest gift of all the wide world is a meek and docile, you want that.

Would you rather have that than be famous? Would you rather have that than be great? A meek and quiet heart, which is in the sight of God, the great Christ, the Spirit that has been domesticated, tamed. God

finds us like the wild asses cold, our nostrils wide and our eyes blazing and our ears laid back, hating the touch of leather, hating the touch and smell of a man. And the Holy Ghost comes and takes us over and starts, as we say, a break on the farm.

They call it breaking a coat. After a while, the whole nature of the animal changes. He'll prick his ears up when he sees you coming.

His eyes are calm now. Lay your hand on his neck and he'll lean over and muzzle you. Say, get up, he'll go.

Say, whoa, he'll stop. All the language. Let your little kid go out and play with him.

No harm, he's been domesticated. And the Spirit of God wants to do that for you, my friends. He wants to domesticate you, humble you and meet you, make you meek, not make you great, make you meek.

And the Christian that has been born a wild ass is cold and has been transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit into a docile, obedient, meek, trustful person, has more and more treasure than all the wealth of the world. Not all the gold in Fort Knox could compare with the wealth that comes to a man or a woman that has been tamed and broken and domesticated and humbled and sweetened and meeked down, as the Quakers say. Well, to sum it all up this time and close, for two to walk together voluntarily, they must be in some measure one.

Had you ever thought of it like that, a oneness of it with the Spirit of God? That there must come a oneness with the Spirit of God, one with him, one in our outlook, one in our hopes, one in our thoughts, oneness with the Spirit of God. And so I cultivate his acquaintance and his fellowship by a oneness. Let us suppose and put it like this.

Let us suppose that a young couple married, and then they found that they had nothing in common, that their music, they never agreed on music. Books, they never agreed on books. Furniture, they never agreed on furniture.

Diet, never agreed on what to have for breakfast or any other meal. Never agreed on anything, had nothing in common. No oneness there.

And all the talk of the preacher, henceforth there shall be no more two but one, yet when? They're not one. They've got nothing in common. How can they walk together a lifetime with nothing in common? And so how can I hope to cultivate the spirit's acquaintance with nothing in common? The harmony in the home must mean that most everything will be in common.

It probably doesn't mean a perfection of one hundred percent, but it must mean in major things a man and wife must have things in common. And so to cultivate the acquaintance of the Holy Spirit means that I must be willing to be one with him. Oh, the old English, how I love it.

I hate modern slang, although I fall into it sometimes, because you hear it all around you. But I love the old words of the English language. Way back in pre-Elizabethan days, they talked about being one with the Holy Ghost.

A man wrote a book called A Cloud of Unknowingness, and in that book he said something to this effect. He didn't want just the average Tom, Dick, and Harry reading that book. It only wanted those to read that

book who wanted to be one with the Holy Ghost, united, made one, made out of two, one, united, identified in holy spiritual union.

So you cultivate the Holy Spirit's acquaintance, first of all, by being one with him and surrendering to him and understanding him, as he does you, and wanting to go the way he goes and be the way he is and be like him and gain the advantage for yourself and for the kingdom of God that comes from knowing him in sweet meekness. You see what I mean when I say some people aren't ready for this? They're not ready for this for the simple reason that they're not ready. They've never come to all this.

They've never decided we two can walk together. But oh, when we do find that out, what a difference it makes. You know, people, that unless God comes within the next few years and fills an increasing number of people with the Holy Ghost, evangelical Christianity is on its way out.

Denominations, and I won't name them, holiness denominations and denominations that once were as orthodox and as sound as can be, are losing out. They're going entertainment, they're going play, they're going eat. And there are gospel churches in Chicago that can't do anything unless they eat along with it.

Can't have a prayer meeting unless you've got to eat along with it. Everything, eat, eat your way to heaven. And you can meet them and talk with them and you don't know them from the world.

And there's no more spirituality than there is in a meeting at the high school for graduation. Maybe they'll sing a spiritual number or two, but they sing them in high school too. All the evidence I see from everywhere is that we're holding on to our doctrine and going to pieces in our living and in our methods and in our values and our objectives.

And unless God can get a few people that he can fill with the Holy Ghost and plant the seed of survival again and begin to grow the trees of the Lord in this wilderness, it'll be a total wilderness. You middle-aged people, you came in and you found the pure spirituality. You're old now, maybe, some of you, and when you were middle-aged you found it.

And what are you going to do with it? What are we going to leave to our children? To me that's the most serious thing. Somebody said the other day, I don't remember who it was, I talked to a lot of people, but it might have been Brother McAfee, I don't know. But we were discussing together how many of our dear old people have gone from us.

They're gone and you can't bring them back. They've gone to that not mysterious realm, there's nothing mysterious about it. They've gone to the bosom of their Father and their God, they've gone to look on the face of Jesus, and I wouldn't want them back.

But unless you younger people are willing to pay the price they paid and live the way they live and be as reckless and daring as they were and as attached to the person of Jesus in exclusive radical attachment, we're going to leave, if the Lord carries a few years, we're going to leave a poor shoddy church to our children. We don't do it, we don't do it. We must be everything our fathers were.

We must. Our pilgrim fathers knelt on the bare rocks and worshipped God. And we mustn't take for granted the price they paid.

We also must be spiritual people. We must know God, we must cultivate God, we must make his acquaintance, we must be filled with him, and then we must go on in intimate cultivation of his person.

Now, next Sunday night, God willing, I shall preach another sermon, altogether different, on how to cultivate the spirits and thank him.

But we're going to close now, and you'll bow with me, please, a moment in prayer. Oh, Lord Jesus, we pray thee for our people. We pray thee for these friends who have been here this evening and have listened.

We pray thee for the young people especially. We'd like to see older people filled with the Holy Ghost, surrender and give up and enter into a new wonderful experience. But if they did, they wouldn't have much time to do much with it.

But young people may have a lifetime to shine. Now, I thought, oh, we pray that these may be willing to give up the all for the all, that they may be willing to become one with the Holy Spirit in sacred, moral, and spiritual union. To be like him, to walk with him, to love him, to obey him, to trust him, to rejoice in him, to be glad in him, and live in the spirit as the fish in the sea and the bird in the air, as our environment, as their environment, in life and all.

Now, before we close this prayer, people, who'd like to have me pray for you? You'd say, Mr. Tozer, my whole heart is stirred and touched, and I want you to pray for me because I just feel that I must, I must know what you're talking about. You've been preaching over my head and around me, and I want you to pray for me. Oh, just raise a hand.

I know, yes, God bless you, you, you, you over here. Yes, yes, only men tonight. Yes, yes, only one woman tonight.

Oh, Father, we pray for all these who raise their hands. Oh, God, we pray, break them loose from their friends, break them loose from their little block of society, break them loose, we pray thee, from the little things that interest them, and take them aside, if need be, into the desert. Take them into the silence of their own room, take them somewhere, and in awful glorious vision, may they come through to a place where they've taken Christ as their all in all forever, and surrender to the Spirit of God to be in them, to guide them, to be to them inward and outward and around and beneath and above, all that the water is to the fish, all that the air is to the bird on the wing, more than that, all that the soul is to the human body, all that the Spirit is to the soul, may they do this, Lord, for Jesus' sake.

Disturb them, Lord, don't let them forget this, don't let them settle down, oh God, to another week of grubbing, but may this be the week that all that we've heard over the last week and heard today may become a living reality in our hearts. Jesus breaks every fetter, Jesus breaks every fetter, Jesus breaks every fetter, and it sets me free, even though that doesn't quite, not quite in mood with the message. I have a feeling that a from entering into moral understanding with what I've talked about, let's trust God to break the fetters.

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