

Drawing Closer to God (2)

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4. Think about the Holy Spirit more often

We need to think about the Holy Spirit more often. This is a very practical thing that you can do that will bring surprising spiritual results. This is just a matter of choosing to implement the discipline of thinking about the Holy Spirit more often. That which is spirit-led will always be Jesus-centred. The Holy Spirit will help to guide your mind to the things of God, to Christ Jesus Himself. When you learn to slow down and make it a point to think about the Holy Spirit more often, to be mindful of His presence, then something begins to take place in you.

Colossians 3:23-24

²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

The scripture here tells us that whatever we do, we need to do it as unto the Lord. Obviously, this is not talking about secular or sinful ways. This is talking about how we live our lives. Everything that we do ought to be done with the Lord in mind or with the presence of the Holy Spirit in mind.

I once heard a statement that went something like this. The job of the Christian shoemaker isn't to put a bunch of little crosses on all of the shoes. The job of the Christian shoemaker is to make really good shoes. In other words, it is in our excellence, it is in our character, it is in our conduct that we in a way preach Jesus Christ.

Yes, we need to preach the gospel, and we need to preach it clearly, we need to preach against sin clearly, and we need to explain the way of the Lord Jesus. We need to clearly state things like salvation is found alone in Jesus. In addition to our clear communication of the gospel, we should also be living lives of excellence. We should also be living lives where we represent the Kingdom of God.

On Sundays, I dress up because I believe this is how God want me to dress up. Other pastors may have different perspectives about this but for me personally, I want to dress up to honour God. I see the honour in the role I am in and the God I am serving. I say this to emphasise the point that we are thinking of the Holy Spirit even in the way that we dress.

Now be careful that this doesn't turn into what we would call religious OCD (short for obsessive-compulsive disorder, OCD obsessions are lasting and unwanted thoughts that keep coming back or urges or images that are intrusive and cause distress or anxiety). Religious OCD is like having fear that maybe you miss the Holy Spirit on something very specific and very small. Like, sometimes, you are walking through the aisle and you may get this urge like I need to go around that corner, turn right on that aisle, I need to go stand in aisle 7 for 10 minutes. OK, that may be the Holy Spirit, but it could also be your own imagination.

If you are not careful, you begin to torment and torture yourself mentally and emotionally because you are attributing something to the voice of the Holy Spirit that came from your mind and emotion. So, I am not talking about that way of living, but I am talking about a simple mindfulness recognising that the Holy Spirit is with you. That you represent the King, that there is a legal presence on you, a royal presence on you. Whether in your conduct, the way you talk, the way you carry yourself, or the way you treat other people, they are all going to be expressed in different ways, as you begin to become mindful of Him.

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

The Bible here is telling us to choose what we think about. God would not instruct us through His word to do something impossible. God only instructs us to do something if it is possible for us to keep that command. So here in this New Testament instruction, we are told that we should choose to fix our thoughts on the things that are honourable, true and right, pure, lovely and admirable. We are to think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise, naturally including the word of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

As a born-again Christian, when you walk through this life mindful of the presence of the Holy Spirit, it changes the way that you live because you are aware that He is next to you at all times. When you are aware of that beautiful presence that rests upon your life, the way that you live begins to change. Let us make it a habit to think about the Holy Spirit more often, of course, this will help to cultivate that friendship with the Holy Spirit.

5. Respond as soon as the Holy Spirit speaks.

This one is very important. This is reactive obedience.

Isaiah 6:8

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”

And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

Let's look at the prophet Isaiah's example here. Here we see an immediate response to the voice of the Holy Spirit. It was a reactive obedience. We need to practise reactive obedience. If you struggle with intrusive or disturbing thoughts, you have got to be very careful to make sure that you are not mistaking your intrusive or disturbing thoughts for the voice of the Holy Spirit. If you do and you try to practise reactivity to that, that could be a disaster for you.

The Holy Spirit does not pressure or push you. There may be times that He speaks urgently, like the time when I was sick, the Holy Spirit spoke to Angie “Take David to Hospital right away!” Because I didn't want to wait in the emergency room so I moaned about it and delayed until the next morning, but, thankfully, I did. If I had delayed for a few more days I would perhaps be enjoying my new life in heaven.

So that was an urgent word from the Holy Spirit. Sometimes He does speak urgently, but generally speaking, the Holy Spirit does not pressure, or push.

Here we see that Isaiah the prophet responded instantaneously. It was reactive obedience. How often have you heard somebody brag about the fact that they are sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit and say things like, “Oh, I hear the voice of the Holy Spirit all the time, He is always constantly talking to me.” However, it is not very impressive if they are not responding to Him. What is more impressive is if you respond to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Sensitivity to the voice of the Holy Spirit is not just about how clearly or how often you hear Him. Sensitivity to the voice of the Holy Spirit is also about how quickly you respond when He speaks.

Think about the time when you have a sensitive tooth and you touch it, maybe with food or a toothbrush. Instantly there is a reaction. Why? Because sensitivity causes reactivity. When I am sensitive to the voice of the Spirit, when He speaks, I move. When He speaks, I change directions in accordance with His prompting. When He speaks, I respond and I obey.

We need to develop the habit of practising this. We need to make it a point to respond as soon as the Holy Spirit speaks. Reactive obedience is what we want to take into the next season. As we do, we are going to see this cultivation of a deeper friendship with the Holy Spirit. You will begin to sense His nearness. You will be more aware of the presence that abides with you.

He does not leave you or abandon you just because you make mistakes or you don't get all these things right, but your awareness of His presence and your appreciation for His presence can be affected by whether or not you are walking in obedience.

6. Allow the Holy Spirit to work through you to help others you know.

When you begin to walk in the Spirit, power will come upon you for effective ministry. As God has given you spiritual gifts, He will empower you for that ministry.

1 John 2:27

²⁷ As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.

There is the anointing within you, the Holy Spirit's work within us. That is the work of sanctification. That is obviously the work that comes about as a result of our salvation, but ‘the Holy Spirit's power upon us’, as stated in Acts 1:8, is for ministry. The anointing within you is for you, the anointing upon you is for others. The anointing within you is the work of salvation, the anointing upon you is the work of ministry.

1 Corinthians 2:4-5

⁴My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, ⁵ so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

This is a powerful passage of scripture. The apostle Paul talks about the fact that there was a demonstration that went along with the message. Now you and I, as we allow the Holy Spirit to work through us in things like prophecy, the gifts of healing, discernment, speaking in tongues, all these wonderful spiritual gifts and ministries, ministries like deliverance, preaching and evangelism, soul-winning, witnessing, all of these are expressions of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. As you begin to allow the Holy Spirit to use you in these areas, as you begin to allow the Holy Spirit to demonstrate His power through you, you begin to see the Holy Spirit's presence in His nature that you have not seen before.

Walking in His power in this way will help you to see a side of Him that you might have missed had you not walked in that power. Perhaps this is the season to begin to stir up our spiritual lives. Perhaps this is the season to begin to walk in that power. Perhaps it is the season to begin to become a greater witness, a bolder witness, to begin to allow the spiritual gifts to be stirred up within you so that you might be used for the glory of God. As you begin to see this power flow through you to help others, you are going to understand a side of the power and the presence and the nature of the Holy Spirit that you would not have otherwise understood.

Now, let us look at the seventh thing that we ought to be engaging in. This one is what I want to challenge you with. This is something I believe that most Christians struggle with, and I think this is perhaps one of the biggest struggles that Christians have. This is often because of the way that we are taught about legalism and earning God's grace based on works. We have to be careful of these things. My prayer is that the body of Christ would stop questioning whether or not the Holy Spirit was with them.

7 Trust that He is with you.

Say it by faith "He is with me". Even if you don't believe it completely, even if your feelings tell you otherwise, even if your circumstances seem to indicate something else, I want you to say it in your heart, 'He is with me', or 'He abides in me' or 'the Holy Spirit lives in me'. Whichever you choose to say, make it a declaration of faith that indicates the Holy Spirit dwells in you. You have to trust that He is with you. Tell Him, "I trust you, Holy Spirit." You have to trust that He is with you.

So often we imagine that whenever we make a mistake, the Holy Spirit dislike us and moves away immediately. Well, that is not the case. Remember, the Holy Spirit does not easily leave the believer. The Holy Spirit may grieve within a believer. Are there consequences to sin for mankind and believers? Of course, there are. Sin is a destructive force, but the Holy Spirit is not going to abandon you just because you made some mistakes. He is going to abide with you so that He can help you get it right. Is this sloppy grace? No, because the Holy Spirit abides with you, you have been given the power to live in a holy manner. Grace is not a licence to sin, grace is the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, the indwelling, empowering presence

of the Holy Spirit, which enables you to walk in holiness. Why would God remove himself from you? It doesn't make any sense to remove himself if it is your only chance of being holy, away from the punishment of not being holy.

Romans 8:14-17

¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “*Abba*, Father.” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

The Bible here very clearly says that the Holy Spirit causes us to cry “*Abba* Father,” the Spirit testifies with our spirit. What a beautiful truth this is. The Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Think about that. When your emotions say God has rejected you, the Holy Spirit takes issue with that and He says, “I have not rejected you.” When your circumstances indicate that perhaps God has abandoned you, the Holy Spirit reassures you that He has never left you. When everything in you is questioning whether or not you still belong to God, the Holy Spirit assures you that you belong to God as an adopted child, a co-heir with Christ. Sometimes we feel distant from God, we feel rejected by God, and we feel like we have been put out of the family. We feel like we have been cut off, but we need to live by faith, not by feelings. We go by the truth of the word of God and the confirmation and the witness of the Holy Spirit.

As you enter into the next season to be drawn closer to the Holy Spirit, and of course, when I say drawn closer, I am using that as a term of phrase. What I mean is that His influence has increased in our lives or our awareness of His presence and appreciation for His presence has increased in our lives. If you say “I want to walk in that awareness, I want to walk in that closeness, I want to experience what it is to live in that connection, I want to learn what it is to live from that connection with the Holy Spirit,” you are going to have to begin to implement these spiritual practises because they are based on the word of God, as you trust that, he is with you.

Maybe you have been abandoned by people. Maybe you have been rejected. Maybe your whole life has just been a series of rejections, a series of abandonments, a series of heartaches and it is very difficult for you to trust people. Maybe somewhere deep down in the recesses of your mind, deep within your heart, you believe that there is just something so broken in you that nobody wants you around, that nobody feels comfortable when you are near, that nobody wants to accept you. Maybe you believe something like that, may the Holy Spirit speak against those lies. I believe the Holy Spirit is confirming within you this morning saying, “I have not abandoned you, I do want you, I have not rejected you, you are mine,” and you have to choose to believe that, even when you don't feel that, you have to choose to believe it. Remember, by the Holy Spirit, we cry, *Abba* Father, we are his children, we are accepted by God the Father.