

MEDITATIONS ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

Western Regional Pastor – Phil Noordmans



What follows is a series of meditations on the Holy Spirit intended to remind us as we move toward our 2026 Annual Gathering who the Holy Spirit is and what He is willing and able to do when we gather in Jesus' Name.

1) The Holy Spirit Points Us to Jesus

The hardest member of the Trinity to get to know is the Holy Spirit simply because He constantly deflects attention from Himself to Jesus.

*When the Helper comes,
whom I will send to you from the Father,
the Spirit of truth,
who proceeds from the Father,
he will bear witness about me. John 15:26, ESV*

He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. John 16:14, ESV

The two underlined phrases make it clear that the Holy Spirit does not stand up and shout, "Hey! Look at Me!" Rather, He points us to Jesus.

In her book, *The Helper*, Catherine Marshall wrote about a banquet honoring a woman who was retiring after twenty-five years as head of the Sunday School Beginner's Department.

Patiently, without self-consciousness, she had endured the speeches praising her. Then she rose to speak. In three minutes, as the Spirit spoke through her, she preached one of the most eloquent sermons we had ever heard. "All these years," she told us, "the children have been teaching me about Jesus. He's real to them, and they have made Him more real to me than I would have thought possible twenty-five years ago." Her eyes were twinkling. "For instance, I remember the little boy who burst out with, 'If Jesus came right through that door now, I'd run right up and hug Him.' I owe such a great deal to the children." As she sat down, we no longer thought of her--only of Jesus.

Marshall went on to observe,

And that is typical of the Helper. Always there is a transparency in His personality so that Jesus can shine through. It is the Spirit's specific work to reveal facets of the Lord's personality rather than His own to us; to woo us and lead us to that Other, to glorify Him, to bring Him and His words to our remembrance.¹

When we as a Conference assemble for our Annual Gathering, we will intentionally welcome the Holy Spirit. One of the results will be that Jesus, who is the Head of the Church and the source of our life, will be magnified among us.

2) The Holy Spirit Produces Spiritual Fruit

“If you cut me, I bleed green.” Taken out of context, that statement is jarring, but in context, it brought a smile to my face. We were a day-away from the big football rivalry between Michigan and Michigan State. Michigan’s colors are maize and blue; Michigan State’s, green and white. In my conversation with one of our admins – a graduate of Michigan State – she declared, “If you cut me, I bleed green.”

Toward the end of his letter to the Galatians, Paul tells us what will happen when the Holy Spirit dwells in us: the Spirit will produce Christ-like character qualities, i.e., virtues.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Gal. 5:22-23, ESV

On a recent visit to two California vineyards, author Margaret Feinberg discovered that vintners must adopt a long-term approach to their work. According to Feinberg:

The first year a vintner plants shoots of vines rather than seeds because these yield the strongest vines. At the end of the first growing season, he cuts them back. A second year passes. He cuts them back again. Only after the third year does he see his first viable clusters of grapes. Serious vintners leave those clusters on the vines. For most vintners, it's not until year four that they bring in their first harvest.²

But the wine is not ready yet. Freshly bottled wine must age for seven or eight more years before it is ready to serve.

¹ Catherine Marshall, *The Helper* (Avon Books, 1978), 22.

² Margaret Feinberg, "Napa Valley on Leadership," Q Shorts, www.Qideas.org

The fruit of the Spirit takes time to mature. The fruit we are referring to is “of the Spirit” in the sense that the Holy Spirit is the source or cause of it. In the soil of our hearts the Spirit slowly grows love, joy, etc. These Christ-like character qualities are not the result of self-effort or trying harder but resting and abiding in Christ.

Character matters because who we are on the inside will govern how we interact with others and how we contribute to the health of our churches and communities. Most of us have been injured by someone displaying immature fruit.

One of my frequent practices is to turn my palms down reminding me to let go of sin and selfish desires. Then, I turn my palms up and pray, “Fill me afresh with the Holy Spirit and grow Your fruit in my life today. I feel a special need for”

In God’s time the Holy Spirit grows His fruit to fuller measure within us. I like that, and so do people around me.

What results when someone “cuts” you?

3) The Holy Spirit Distributes Spiritual Gifts

Since it was one of my first attempts at down-hill snow skiing, I decided to sign up for a lesson. Five novices awkwardly followed an instructor to the Bunny Hill to learn how to snowplow, bend our knees, and fall without hurting ourselves. About 15 minutes into the lesson, I became very critical of our teacher. If he knew how to ski – and, I assumed he did – he was doing a lousy job (in my opinion) of passing on his knowledge to us. I said to myself, “Even though I know next to nothing about snow skiing, I think I could do a better job of teaching others how to do it.”

Eventually that experience on the Bunny Hill led to an important observation about identifying our spiritual gifts. We tend to be critical of others in areas where we have God-given strengths. I was critical of our ski instructor because one of my God-given spiritual gifts is teaching.

Reflect on your own interactions. Where do you tend to be critical? I know a man who was shocked when he observed that no one was welcoming new commers when they came through the door. His disgust pointed to his gifts in hospitality.

Regarding spiritual gifts, the Apostle Paul wrote,

All these [manifestations of the Spirit, 12:7] are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

1 Corinthians 12:11, ESV

The NASB translates the same verse this way:

One and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

1 Corinthians 12:11, NASB

In this verse the Apostle Paul gives the Holy Spirit credit for two things:

1. Empowering each and every spiritual gift.

A car without an engine is useless. The Holy Spirit is the engine that empowers the gifts.

2. Distributing gifts as He chooses.

Hence, there is no room in the family of God for envy, pride, or jealousy. We get what we get because the Holy Spirit determines who gets what gifts as well as the magnitude of each.

The “fruit of the Spirit” pertains to Christ-like character qualities, to who we are as we serve. By comparison, the “gifts of the Spirit” pertain to tools entrusted to us to use while serving.

Spiritual gifts are manifestations of the Spirit for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7). They are spiritual tools distributed by the Holy Spirit for strengthening the church and advancing the gospel. A few decades ago, everyone in the American Church seemed to be talking about spiritual gifts. We gave people “spiritual gifts tests” and taught copiously on the charisms. For some reason that emphasis has faded. In my opinion we would be wise to resurrect the study of, and application of, spiritual gifts.³

When a congregation, a small group, or a conference welcomes the Holy Spirit, He responds by drawing near to activate and energize spiritual gifts among us for His glory, the common good, and the gospel’s advance.

³ I feel so strongly about this that I published a book entitled [A Primer on Spiritual Gifts](#). Those who have read it speak highly of its value. Before reading it, pls be aware that I believe there is a valid expression in our day of every gift mentioned in Scripture. There are also distortions and counterfeits.

4) The Holy Spirit Empowers Believers for Witness and Service

His white hair, wrinkled face, and warm eyes underscored his age and wisdom. Dr. Doug McMurry leaned forward and declared with conviction, “There is a big difference between “might and power” strategies for building Christ’s church, and “by my Spirit” strategies. Then he quoted one of his favorite verses in the Old Testament.

*Not by might,
nor by power,
but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts. Zechariah 4:6, ESV*

How does God get His work done? By His Spirit working in and through His people.

Too often we rely on “might and power” strategies to grow Christ’s church, things like booming sound systems, fancy lighting, and trendy wardrobes. (Currently, white-soled tennis shoes are big in the area where I live.) None of these techniques are necessarily bad but if that is all we have, the result may be growth but not necessarily growth in Christlikeness.

In his book, *Erasing Hell*, Francis Chan wrote,

I bet you’d agree that a group of talented, charismatic leaders can draw a crowd. Find the right creative team, musicians, and speakers, and you can grow any church. It doesn’t even have to be a Christian church. The fact is that without making a conscious choice to depend on the Holy Spirit, we can do a lot.⁴

It is not uncommon to hear someone teach on the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, or how He illuminates Scripture, or His work of sealing us for the day of redemption, but it is rare to hear solid, balanced teaching on the empowering work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus did not share our timidity. Following His resurrection, one of Jesus’ promises to His disciples was this:

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Acts 1:8, ESV

There is a significant difference in both the Old Testament and the New between the Holy Spirit dwelling “in” us and the Holy Spirit coming “on” or “upon” us. Acts 1:8 speaks of the Holy

⁴ Francis Chan and Preston Sprinkle, *Erasing Hell* (David C. Cook, 2011), 181.

Spirit coming “upon” us to empower us for even more effective witness and service. Think about that and do your own study.⁵ The advance of the gospel depends on it.

5) The Holy Spirit Gives Guidance

After purchasing the materials I needed at Home Depot to install a cabinet in our laundry room, I walked to my car and slid into the driver’s seat. As I did, a clear, quiet phrase entered my mind. “Go to the seminary now.” At that moment the last thing on my mind was the seminary. Besides, we were new to town and I did not even know where it was located. Further, I just wanted to get my cabinet installed. Nevertheless, by that point in my life I was beginning to learn to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit. I knew I had a choice: go to the seminary, or go home. I chose the seminary.

When I arrived on campus, I asked a random student to point me to the office. To my surprise it was 50 steps away. When I walked in, I said to the admin, “I’m new in town and would like to know a little more about the seminary.” She said, “Just a moment.” Five minutes later I was ushered into an office to talk with a professional, friendly-looking gentleman. Only later did I learn that he was the President!

That act of obedience led to a long and fruitful friendship that continues to this day.

Yes, the same Holy Spirit who gave guidance ...

- To Jesus (*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness ... Luke 4:1, ESV*);
- To the Church in Antioch (*While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Acts 13:2, ESV*);
- To the Jerusalem counsel (*It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements ... Acts 15:28, ESV*); and,
- To Paul and Timothy (*They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. Acts 16:6, ESV*);

⁵ Do your own study and see what you discover. You will find some of the thing I have learned along the way in [FireStarter: The Holy Spirit Empowers](#), and [A Primer on the Empowering Work of the Holy Spirit](#).

... stands ready and willing to guide us as individuals, families, churches, and a conference. Jesus declared, *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, John 10:27, ESV.* Further, Paul stated, *All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. Romans 8:14, ESV*

The good news includes this reality:

Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left. Isaiah 30:21, ESV

When we come together for our Annual Gathering, let's ask Jesus to bless us with clear guidance at every step of the road. That is something He is willing and able to do through His Spirit for His glory, thereby leading us corporately, as individuals, and as family units.

Join the adventure!