



## Go where the Spirit works

This week's meditation is about the working of the Holy Spirit. It always amazes me how many kids struggle for God's leading in their lives. You've been there: Where to go to school? What should be my major? What minor? Whom to date and marry? Why doesn't God show me more clearly the way He wants my life to go? If God forgives, why don't feel forgiven? If God speaks, why can't I hear Him?

What often happens during such quests is that kids tend to lose their zeal and even sometimes wander from the faith, no longer believing God is real or that God cares about them. That's why, for many kids, college is a time of spiritual drifting. Maybe it is for you or for one of your friends.

There are lots of things I could say about all this, but I want to say just a thing or two about the normal way the Holy Spirit of God works in our lives. I think it might help.

To be sure, the Holy Spirit *could* do whatever He wants to do. He *could* send a tongue of fire on the head of the woman or man you're supposed to marry – sort of like the miracle He worked at Pentecost in Acts 2. That would make dating a breeze, wouldn't it? He *could* empower you with miraculous knowledge about the future, like He did with the NT prophet Agabus (Acts 11:28). (If He did, you'd figure out pretty quickly what courses would be a waste of time, which you should drop, and which ones would equip you for your future career.)

He *could* cause a blinding light from heaven to get your attention when you were in danger of "crossing the line" morally. (Like He did when Saul was on the way to Damascus to kill and capture early Christians — Acts 9.) He *could* do all these things, but He usually doesn't.

These examples from the book of Acts describe ways the Holy Spirit worked in specific cases in the early history of the church. People often tell me they wish they could hear the apostles preach, see Jesus with their own eyes, walk where Jesus walked, witness His miracles. Then, in light of the signs and wonders they experienced with their own senses, they would believe with more confidence. So, they wonder, why doesn't the Holy Spirit work that way anymore?

But remember Jesus' words to doubting Thomas? "Because you have seen me (and put your finger into my nail prints and into my side) you have believed; blessed are those who have *not seen* and yet have believed" (John 20:29). Jesus tells us in the next verses just what that "not seen and yet believed" phrase means: It refers to people like us, who come to faith only through the Word of God. We in the 20th Century cannot have 1st Century eyewitness experiences; we must believe because it is written down for us.

So, despite how the Holy Spirit *could* work, how does He *usually* work?

Well, in the first place, the Holy Spirit works through the Word of God, the text of Scripture. John 6:63 says something amazing about this:

*"The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life."*(!)

Catch that? The Words of Jesus, the very ones recorded in the pages of the Bible, *are spirit and they are life!* They're not just a reference manual about religion. They're from "God's mouth to my ear!"

At the very least, this suggests that people who really want to know what the Spirit wants them to know and to do must *immerse their minds and hearts in the Word of God*. As St. Augustine once wrote: *"Take up the Book and read! Take up the Book and read!"*

You want to know whom to marry? No, the Bible won't give you his or her name. But the Scripture *will* clearly tell you, if you immerse yourself in its pages, exactly what the criteria are for you to make a wise and Biblical choice! You may marry only a believer (1 Corinthians 7:40); you should look (if you're a gal) only for someone who loves you like Christ loves His bride, the church; you should look (if you're a guy) only for a woman who loves you submissively by insisting that you give tender spiritual leadership that never abuses or is selfish (Ephesians 5:21ff). You see, the Spirit does speak directly to you if you go where He works!

In the second place, the Holy Spirit usually works through the ministry of the local church. In 1 Peter 1:23-25 (an incredible passage — read it carefully!), the Spirit's messenger Peter tells us that being born again requires that we have a seed planted by God in our hearts. Further, he tells us that this imperishable seed is planted only *by* the Word of God, and even more specifically, *when* the Word of God is preached! That's astounding. If you are drifting from the Lord, wishing you *could* be more "on fire" for Christ, frustrated and guilty about your inactive faith, this passage says something powerful: *get yourself under the faithful preaching of the Word of the Lord!* That's where He promises to work on you. That's where He is active. Go where the Holy Spirit works!

Thirdly, Hebrews 10:24-25 tells us one other place where we can expect the Spirit to be at work: in the interactive fellowship and communion of believers. There, where we "*consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good works,*" where we "*do not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing,*" and where we "*encourage one another,*" we are active in the arena of the Holy Spirit. In fact, the word for "encourage" is the very word that in John 16:7 is translated "counselor" or "comforter." (For linguists, the Greek word in Hebrews 10:25 "*parakalountes*" is the participle form of the Greek noun "*paraclete*" — the name for the Holy Spirit in John 16:7.) The point? You want to submerge yourself under the healing, cleansing, encouraging flow of the Holy Spirit? Get involved within a church fellowship, where you establish relationships of trust, love, encouragement and accountability. Don't just "attend" a church; be a faithful participant in a church community. Get to know the people, sins, warts and all, and allow them to get to know you. That's where the Spirit works His healing, encouraging, forgiving grace!

To grow wise, to mature spiritually, to serve the Lord with zeal and perspective, requires the Holy Spirit's leading. My point is simple: if you need the Spirit's leading, *go where the Spirit works!*

Guys: immerse yourself in the Bible: read it, meditate on it, get involved in a Bible study. Involve yourself in a local church. Go where

1. the Word is faithfully preached (you'll know if you keep your Bible open and if the preacher walks you through his text. If the last time you hear about the text is when he's finished reading it, just before his "speech on a subject," you haven't heard preaching, just a nice talk), and where
2. you can be actively challenged, encouraged, taught, and held accountable — all things the Spirit does.

So, guys, go where the Spirit works! Don't double-dare Him to change you while you immerse yourself in the pagan world and all its passionate activities. Don't blame Him if you don't feel Him working in your life if, at the same time, you never seek Him where He promises to be! *Go where the Spirit works! Start today!*

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