

FRIDAY: Purpose & Reality – Growth

Read: Luke 4:1-15 ¹ And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness ² for forty days, being tempted by the devil...³ The devil said to him...⁴ And Jesus answered him...¹³ And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time. ¹⁴ And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee...

Reflect:

Sometimes we have the wrong idea that a life 100% led by the Holy Spirit will be wonderful and full of bliss. While there are wonderful times as a follower of Jesus, being open to the Spirit's leading won't always be pleasant...

Here Luke says Jesus was "led by the Spirit" for the purpose of being tested. The word for "led" isn't always associated with pleasant experiences (cf. Lk4:29; 19:27; 22:54; 23:1,32; Acts5:26; 6:12; etc.). From those other texts we can see that often there is some force associated with it (cf. Mk1:12 where the Spirit "cast Jesus out" into the wilderness).

Yet as Jesus' example clearly shows, whatever the Holy Spirit leads you to, He will help you through. He is always faithful. He desires to assist our obedience and the process of maturing spiritually. This is fortunate because times of testing always come (cf. v13).

Respond:

How do you handle the different functions of the Holy Spirit in your life? Do you welcome the assurance He brings but shun His promptings for growth?

Are you aware of a test the Spirit may have in store for your spiritual growth? How will you be victorious in it?

Notice Jesus faced His testing with His knowledge of God's word. What Scripture addresses a test you regularly face?

Pray: Ask God for help to face the areas of life that test your faith. Pray for your willingness to submit to the Holy Spirit's guidance in your life. Thank God for the many volunteers of NLCC.

SATURDAY: United

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 ¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...¹⁴ For the body does not consist of one member but of many...²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you,"... ²⁴...But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, ²⁵ that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another...

Reflect:

Humanity is the crowning point of God's physical creation. After He created Adam and Eve creation was pronounced "good-good" (very good). The physical human bodies were to be the caretakers of God's physical creation...

The "body of Christ" is currently the crowning point of God's spiritual creation. The "call" of Abram led to the "call" of Israel, from whom came the Christ. Jesus is no longer in the world, but His body is...

It seems odd to think that so many different people, from different walks of life (i.e., you and I), are really "one." Yet that is the reality. It is also the beauty. If everyone was like you (or I) the "body" wouldn't be very functional. It wouldn't achieve its purpose...

Respond:

What are you doing today to prepare yourself for corporate worship at the building tomorrow?

Do you have the humility to acknowledge that it is a good thing everyone isn't "just like you?"

On a scale of 1-10 (10 being the highest), how high does your concern for others who come to NLCC rate? Do your actions and thoughts match up to that rating?

Pray: Thank God for another day to live for Him. Ask for God's blessing on our corporate worship tomorrow – pray that He is honored and our guests feel welcomed. Pray for a teacher who will be serving tomorrow at the building.

Roping the Wind

March 30 – April 5

fickle \ˈfi-kəl\ adj

- **Definition:** marked by lack of steadfastness, constancy, or stability : given to erratic changeableness
- **Synonyms:** capricious, changeable, temperamental, variable, volatile.
- **Related words:** unfaithful, undependable, unreliable

Have you ever noticed how fickle we are?

- (During the winter)
 - My goodness it is cold...I'm likely to freeze to death! And that wind makes it almost unbearable...it just cuts right through a person. I sure wish that wind would quit blowing...
- (During the summer)
 - Land's sake it sure is hot...I'm burnin' up! There isn't hardly any air moving at all...boy, a nice wind sure would be nice...
- Can we not make up our minds?

Granted, the above examples are two extremes...but it paints an interesting picture doesn't it? You have to admit that it's almost comical. Humanity, generally speaking, has practically a rabid desire for control over the things around us, the things which influence and impact our lives; ironically, even the things over which we have no control – like the wind...

Winds are destructive; we've all seen pictures of hurricane and tornados. Winds are enjoyable; we've all seen a kite in the air. Winds are unpredictable; we've all drove north into the wind only to make a return trip that same day (even an hour later) driving into a south wind. The wind will simply blow however "it" sees fit.

The Greek word for "wind" is also translated as "spirit" – as in the Holy Spirit. While we know it would be incorrect to say that the winds we physically experience today are the same as the Holy Spirit (words can have multiple meanings – "right"?), we should also know that we don't (can't) control Him. His function is to bring glory to the Father and Son. The question is...will we complain or rejoice about His work in our lives?

MONDAY: Reality – Eternal

Read: Judges 3:9-10⁹ But when the people of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel, who saved them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother. ¹⁰ The Spirit of the LORD was upon him, and he judged Israel...And his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim. Judges 14:6⁶ Then the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and although he had nothing in his hand, he tore the lion in pieces as one tears a young goat...

Reflect:

The Spirit of YHWH (God) has always been active in the world. He was involved in creation (Gen1:1-2), the making of the priestly garments (Exod28:3), the shaping of precious materials (Exod31:3), and the construction of the Tabernacle (Exod35:31).

In Judges we see that YHWH’s Spirit also empowered people for leadership (Othniel) and for unnatural physical feats (Samson). In other places we read that the Spirit empowered individuals for prophecy (e.g., 1Chron15:1-2).

Yet despite all of His involvement, we have no indication that the Spirit of YHWH stayed with people by ‘permanently’ indwelling them (except for David 1Sam16:13). Is this a minor issue? What were the people living prior to Pentecost missing?

Respond:

Although the Spirit is only explicitly called the “Holy Spirit” three times in the Old Testament (Ps51:11; Isa63:10-11), why is it important to note He’s always been active?

Why do you think David was so scared about the possibility of God removing His Holy Spirit?

Why is the Holy Spirit a necessity for those leading God’s people?

Pray: Thank God that His Spirit has always been active in the world. Pray that you are open to the Spirit’s guidance this week. Pray for Ed Asbury, a deacon of NLCC; thank God for his service and seek God’s protection for him and Kathy (his wife).

TUESDAY: Purpose – Convicting

Read: John 16:7-15⁷ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in me...¹² “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth...¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you...

Reflect:

Life with Jesus physically present, wouldn’t that have been wonderful? We certainly like to think so, but here Jesus says it is to the disciples’ advantage that He goes away. Quite often what the Bible says doesn’t make sense to us at first...

It strikes us as odd, but the reason Jesus sends the Holy Spirit is to “convict the world...” Notice the function of the Spirit (at least here) isn’t focused on the disciples (e.g., for their comfort) but “the world” (for its discomfort).

Simply stated, we cannot convict others of their sin. If we try to do this we will come across as judgmental, bigoted, holier-than-thou, etc. Furthermore, notice the sin about which people suffer a conviction – a lack of belief in Jesus. Apparently the Holy Spirit isn’t interested in simply getting pagans to “live right” if they don’t believe in Jesus...

Respond:

When was the last time you tried to convict a non-believer of their sin? What was the sin and what was the result?

Are you more concerned that people “live right” or that they believe in Jesus first and then are guided into maturity by the Holy Spirit?

For whom can you pray that needs to be convicted about their lack of belief in Jesus?

Pray: Pray for this coming Sunday’s meeting of the elders and preaching minister. Pray for the person you thought of (above) who needs to know Jesus. Pray for Keith Krause, a deacon of NLCC; thank God for his service and seek God’s protection for him and Tammy (his wife).

WEDNESDAY: Purpose – Assuring

Read: Romans 8:12-17¹² So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Reflect:

“So then” (v12), words that signal an appeal to our minds. The cognitive, thinking part of Christianity. Writing to followers of Jesus (e.g., Rom1:7), who had already been immersed (e.g., Rom6:2-3), and therefore had the Holy Spirit dwelling in them (e.g., Rom8:9-11), Paul surmises they should be led by that Spirit. Logically it makes sense...

However, “logically” doesn’t work all the time for everyone (likely anyone). Despite what we know to be true, we often feel we need something more. Sometimes a person following Jesus for years can have questions about their acceptance by God.

Much like how adoption needed to be attested by witnesses to be legal in Rome; in God’s grace He didn’t leave it solely up to us to be sure about our place in His family. The Holy Spirit assures us of our position, which is so valuable when our place might be called into question.

Respond:

What is a specific sin you need to cooperate with the Spirit in putting to death? Will you put forth the effort?

Do you ever doubt your acceptance by God? Read all of Romans 8 and see if it helps.

These verses clearly state the Christian life isn’t easy. Confess to God what you find difficult.

Pray: Thank God for the inheritance that is yours. Pray for this coming Sunday’s Official Church Board Meeting. Pray for Mike Haag, a deacon of NLCC; thank God for his service and seek God’s protection for him and Linda (his wife).

THURSDAY: Reality – Divine

Read: Acts 5:3-4³ But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?” ⁴ While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”

Reflect:

How can the Holy Spirit have so much power? He convicts pagans about their lack of belief in Jesus (e.g., Tuesday), He assures people of their place in God’s family (e.g., Wednesday), and He’s been active throughout history (e.g., Monday). How is this possible?

Peter would say the Holy Spirit is able to do all of those things because He is divine. Notice how he equates Ananias’ lying to the Holy Spirit (v3) with lying to God (v4). Other places indicate the Holy Spirit can be grieved (Eph4:30) and resisted (Acts7:51 – which also indicates the Holy Spirit was active in our OT).

Just like God and Jesus, the Holy Spirit won’t coerce us into doing what we set our minds against doing. Ananias didn’t have to give any of the money away from the sale of his land. Yet he did have to be truthful with his claims...

Respond:

The Holy Spirit also inspired the writers of Scripture (2Pet1:20-21). What condition would the world be in without His continued activity in the world?

Has this week’s look at the Holy Spirit helped you to see Him as a person and not an “it”?

How open are you to the Spirit’s promptings in your life?

Pray: Thank God for His continued activity in the world through the Holy Spirit. Confess to God the last time you didn’t follow the Spirit’s prompting in your life. Pray for the person you prayed for on Tuesday who needs to know Jesus.