



THE *Spirit-Led* HEART



STUDY JOURNAL

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Chapter One: Released from Uncertainty

I scowled at the skinny tree in my garden. I cut it back each season and every year it cropped back up. Like a bully, it crowded out the tender plants I put in the ground.

The tree itself wasn't impressive, but because I had never addressed the root ball, it flourished. I finally took the shovel out of the garage and went to work. It wasn't easy, but I eventually removed every last root. It never came back after that.

Now when I see a weed pop up through the soil, I go for the root first. I'm not going to mess around with what seems to be the issue; I'll get it long before it becomes a tree.

Sometimes we deal with fear like I did that tree.

We address it at a surface level but become frustrated when it crops back up. We chop at it. We hack at it.

And yet it remains.

As we begin our journey of living and loving with a Spirit-led heart, you may feel uncertain, and that's okay. Fear or uncertainty can cause you to go the other way, or miss out on a promise even when you really desire to know more.

Let's go straight to the root of that fear and address it.

IS THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR ME?

Is this for me? Or is this promise only for those tucked in the pages of the New Testament? When we study the book of Acts, one theme emerges: it's the word *equip*. Jesus taught the disciples from the first moment he called out their names. He walked with them. He

instructed them. He led by example.

It not only taught *them* how to live their faith; those same instructions are for us.

His work—that of the Father—must go on. The disciples would become instruments of change, just as we do as we follow Jesus. When it was time to go back to the Father, Jesus didn't stop equipping. He didn't leave them on their own and hope for the best. Instead, he reaffirmed a promise that they would have a Helper, the Holy Spirit.

Read Acts 1:4–5; John 16:13–15; John 16:7; John 14:26; John 15:26.

Q: What is the promise Jesus made?

Q: How does this same promise equip believers today?

Jesus contrasted two different baptisms in Acts 1:4–5. One of water; the other with the Holy Spirit. *Baptism* means “to immerse, plunge, and to be covered.”

- When we are baptized in water, we are immersed, plunged, and covered, symbolizing a change of heart and identity as a believer.
- When we are baptized with the Holy Spirit, we are immersed, plunged, and covered with power to equip us as believers.

The promise of the Holy Spirit was—and continues to be—a direct reflection of Jesus' care for his church. For you. For me.

We can dig up the root ball of fear that says it's not for us. In its place, we plant confidence in every part of our faith. We are free to hold up our hands and ask to be immersed, plunged, and covered in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Will you make that a simple prayer right now?

Will embracing the Holy Spirit as part of my faithview change me?

In Acts 1:8–11, Jesus told the disciples he was leaving, but would come back one day.

There was a “dash” between his leaving and imminent return. The promise of a Helper would equip them to do everything he had taught them in that time frame.

The dash still applies to you and me. While our personalities look the same, we are changed from the inside out. We start to see the world as disciples. We understand that there is still work to be done. We’ll learn how to walk in the Spirit and live by the Spirit (Galatians 5:25), which produces confidence in our Savior. We’ll know where to turn when we feel overwhelmed. We’ll begin to trust that God loves the world and intersects our paths with others with a purpose.

In all of this, we’ll still be ourselves. Ordinary in so many ways, yet equipped.

Read Acts 4:13

Q: What did the crowd notice about the disciples?

Q: In Acts 4:8, what compels these believers to speak with such courage?

How do I include the Holy Spirit in my faithview?

We embrace the Holy Spirit as part of our faithview by simply asking for what we need. As a believer, the Holy Spirit is already in you.

- Invite him into your faithview.
- Release the need to make anything happen, as you simply say yes to the promise.
- Start your day by inviting the Holy Spirit in to every part of your day.



Chapter Two: **Power Greater Than Our Own**

The other day I felt an urgency to send a text to a friend. It read:

Hey, sweet friend, I just want you to know that I see Jesus in you. You are such a prayer warrior. You are anointed, and that pours out through your life. God just dropped you on my heart, and I want you to know that I love you like crazy.

The response came instantly.

Call me.

When I did, she shared a story of an encounter from the day before. It was a gathering, and a couple of relatives got into an argument. It became heated. In the old days, this would have been a prime opportunity for her to jump in the middle of it. As she remained in the midst of dysfunction, she fought old instincts. She wrestled with meeting their bad behavior with an equal response.

Eventually the chaos calmed.

When she left, she beat herself up. She was sad that she was tempted to take things in her own hands. She gave herself no credit for not jumping in the middle.

“That text came just when I needed it,” she said.

“God knows you,” I said. “He was just reminding you of who you are to him.”

A simple text reminded her of the healing work God had done in her life, and who she was becoming. A simple text told her that she was on his mind. A simple text changed the way she saw the situation, and how to address it.

When we obey God, it may seem simple.

However, when simple obedience collides with Holy Spirit power, God is doing something far greater than we can imagine.

WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO OFFER?

Have you ever read a familiar Bible story and suddenly see something new?

That's what happened as I read one more time the story of Peter and John praying for the lame man (Acts 3:4–6). This story is about the dynamis power of the Holy Spirit, but it's also about what we have to give.

When the beggar asked for money, Peter said, "I don't have that to give."

How many times do we become intimidated when we sense God asking us to do something bigger than ourselves?

That's not me.

That's her.

I'm just not that talented or brave.

These might be our responses, but all God is asking is that we give what we do have. When the man asked for money, Peter acknowledged what he didn't have to give, but immediately offered what he did have.

- He had faith.
- Peter believed that when he laid his hands on the man, something miraculous would happen.
- He had time.
- Though he was on his way to the temple, he stopped and talked with him.
- He had mercy.

Peter didn't condemn the man for his station in life, but recognized his need.

When faith, time, and mercy collided with this man's need and Peter's obedience, *dynamis* power surged through the man's legs.

Peter offered what he did have out of obedience, and God worked a miracle. His first move with his new legs was to follow the men who followed Jesus.

I sent a text to my friend because I felt a nudge from the Holy Spirit. Obedience collided with my friend's need. She was encouraged because it affirmed her identity as a child of God.

Maybe you've been looking at what you don't have in a situation.

Perhaps you've been so busy comparing yourself to others, that you've not given what God

sees as unique to you.

Let's flip that. Fill in the blank.

I may not have:

But I do have:

Give these freely to God. Listen for his voice and obey. Delight as obedience meets a burden and connects with the *dynamis* power of the Holy Spirit.

IT'S NOT ABOUT US

Dynamis power is never about us.

It has one purpose, which is to draw the world closer to Christ. That might be the child in your home as you pray for power to persevere beyond your natural patience level. It might be believing for a marriage that is struggling. It might be for one or for a crowd of thousands.

In every case, we discover the world on God's heart.

He cares about people enough to ask you to pray, to believe, to hang in there, to speak a word of encouragement. He's not asking you to shoulder the burden or own the miracle. He's simply asking you to give what you have.

LIVING IN DYNAMIS POWER

Read Luke 24:49

Q: What does it mean to be clothed in *his* power?

Dynamis power is daily power. It's pouring out and reaching with both hands for a refill. You become a witness of God's goodness.

You don't have to look for opportunities, but be open to them. The Holy Spirit will show you. It may seem small and insignificant, but when we obey there's always an eternal impact.

You and God partner in miracles. Let's pause and ask this question right now.

Lord, what miracle do you want me to be a part of?



Chapter Three: **We Will Live in Truth**

I don't know how it got in the outdoor light fixture, but there it was. A tiny beak pressed against the glass. Wings twisted and turned. The bird's head lolled as if too heavy to carry.

The ladder left marks in the grass as I dragged it to the garage. The lid on the light fixture was partially open, but I unscrewed it and sat it on the ground. I put my hand in the small space.

The bird pecked at my fingers halfheartedly. Just enough to make me have to try a different way.

I worked until I could finally pull the little body out and place it on the ground.

I hoped I wasn't too late.

The bird lay on the grass for almost half an hour. Maybe he was working the kinks out of his neck, or reveling in his freedom. More likely, he was just about to give up and didn't recognize that he was free. It hurt too much. He had been trapped for so long. I nudged the bird to sit. It pecked at me the whole time, as if to say, "Get away."

Finally, he stood.

He spread his wings, shuddering from his neck to his tail feathers.

And then he flew away.

I wanted to cheer!

WHAT DOES FREEDOM LOOK LIKE?

Read John 16:13

Let's break down this verse.

The Holy Spirit sets us free. He does that by guiding us into truth (John 16:13a).

We can find ourselves trapped by untruth and half-truths. We wrestle with words spoken over our heart, and live as if they are true. Lies get tangled in our identity.

Then we hear the truth.

Truths like God loves us. That our names are written on the palm of God's hand (Isaiah 49:16). That nothing can separate us from his love (Romans 8:35–39).

As we receive truth, God reaches into our cage and tenderly shows us a way out.

He doesn't just free us, but teaches us to soar.

In the beginning, we may peck away at his touch. Our cage feels safer than freedom. We don't think we can do it. We hold up excuses or half-truths as if to convince God that it's futile.

We throw up excuses like these:

- *Maybe later, when I'm stronger.*
- *Fix that person first, and then I'll do what you ask.*
- *If I try to fly I'll fail.*

When we trust that the purpose of truth is to set us free, we are also free to set those excuses aside. We'll factor failure in the process and call it growth. We'll stop pecking at the hand of the Holy Spirit, and fluff our wings in anticipation.

Q: In what area of your life do you long to live free?

Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you into truth in this area. Ask for courage to fly again.

He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears (John 16:13b).

For years I didn't understand what it meant when someone said, "God has a plan for you." I discovered that his plan was for me to know him. The Holy Spirit knows the heart of the Father. He knows the plans he has for me. The Holy Spirit gently reminds me of who I am.

That's your promise too.

If you are currently trying to discern truth, the Holy Spirit knows what is true, what is a lie, and what is a half-truth. Not only that, he knows what the Father has for you.

Here's a way to listen to him, to hear his voice.

Shut down all the noise (as best as you can). Put your phone in the other room. Get alone with God. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak the Father's heart for you over you.

He (the Holy Spirit) will tell you what is yet to come (John 16:13c).

Perhaps this is my favorite part of this verse.

Jesus is speaking to a group of men who feel a little lost. He's going away, and they want him to stay. Listen as Jesus assures that truth will lead them. They can't see what is ahead, but they can trust that the Holy Spirit will always show them the next step.

John 16:14-15 takes this even deeper. We can trust him in what is yet to come because the Holy Spirit will only lead us into truth that glorifies God.

Our lives become reflective of him.

Why? Because we are his (John 16:15; Romans 8:16; Galatians 4:6)!

Q: John 16:13 makes three distinct promises. How do these three truths lead you to freedom?

Promise 1.

This truth helps me live in freedom because...

Promise 2.

This truth helps me live in freedom because...

Promise 3.

This truth helps me live in freedom because...



Chapter Four: **We Will Never Wander**

Years ago I heard the granddaughter of a missionary tell a story. Her grandfather and his family lived in China. Though they labored for years, there was little to show for it. They returned home discouraged. There were many times they asked if they had missed God's direction.

Years later they returned. When they traveled to the remote area, they were shocked to find a thriving community of believers.

Had someone else been able to do what they could not?

They eventually discovered that this revival traced back to a single translated book of the Bible. It had been taught and handed from person to person over the years, and the results were astounding. The community was comprised of believers and prayer warriors.

When the missionary and his wife discovered the source, they wept. For they were the ones who painstakingly translated the book of John years earlier into that specific dialect.

The translated book fell into good soil, bringing a harvest that they didn't even know had been planted.

What if they hadn't traveled back to China?

They would have gone on to eternity without knowing the impact. Would they have still defined that time as a failure?

Sometimes we get to see what God is doing, and that's incredible. Yet it's likely that we'll have no idea of our eternal impact until eternity. As we say yes to his leading. As we show up every day. As we keep going, even when it appears there is little to no fruit as a result.

It's easy to define direction as a goal, an accomplishment, or as a press release that can tell

the whole world of the good that is taking place. Goals and celebrations are sweet, but our faith is sweetest when we live it right where we are.

It's knee-knocking courage that propels you to say yes, even though it feels hard.

It's seeking God in that waiting time, in that hard place you don't want to be in, or that oh-so-awesome sweet spot you are in right now. He directs us moment by moment, day by day, and throughout our lifetime until we step into eternity and he says, "Well done."

Q: Are you currently in a waiting time, a hard place, or a sweet spot?

Describe that season and how you receive direction.

Read Matthew 25:21

Q: What does it mean to be faithful with what you've been given?

IF GOD IS FOR YOU

Read Acts 5:39

There's an important question to ask, long before we begin to plan.

God, are you in this?

Just because it's a good thing to do, or because we feel needed, or because it seems like a great opportunity, doesn't mean that God is in it.

Our first question is, "God, are you in this?"

There are other questions to ask that help us find direction. We invite the Holy Spirit to share the answers.

1. Am I willing to give up ownership?

When we hold our dreams and goals and tasks lightly, we release ownership to God. If he says, “put it down,” we put it down. If he says, “your part is done,” we cheer on the person who is running the next leg of the race. If he says, “keep going,” we don’t tie our identity to its success or failure.

2. Will I surrender my need to compare?

Our direction is wherever Jesus leads us. Our identity is found in our relationship with him. Both of those are unique to who we are. I’m a speaker, blogger, and author, but I’m also a mom, sister, wife, “Gaga,” and friend. In each of these, my faith plays a role.

It would be easy to compare myself to others who are more gifted, who seem more suited, or who the light shines on more brightly, and yet all that God asks of me is to follow him.

That’s my job! That’s my privilege.

As I follow, he shows me where to go. He reminds me of whose I am. He shows me my unique path. We don’t have to waste even one minute trying to be someone else. We rejoice in discovering who God created us to be, and our part to play.

3. Am I willing to live outside my comfort zone?

I’m a “comfie” girl. I have a blanket that I call my “magic blanket.” It’s soft. It’s long enough to cover my feet. It’s warm without being hot. It’s perfect! Honestly, it would be fairly easy for me to curl up under my magic blanket with a great book and be happy forever.

We will spend time in sweet places that are comfortable, but God continually draws us to live our faith in ways that feel less than comfortable.

- He asks that we trust (Romans 15:13).
- He asks that we believe (Hebrews 11:1).
- He asks that we die to self (Galatians 2:20).
- He asks that we not live by feelings, but by his Word (Proverbs 3:5–6).
- He asks that we step into deeper waters as he leads (Luke 5:4).

Sometimes our comfort zone is staying or stepping into a task. Sometimes it's leaving. It's always "being." The more that we settle into our relationship with God, the less we have to worry about where we are going. He'll show us.

Q: On page 84 of *The Spirit-Led Heart*, Suzie says that one day when we are in eternity, "we'll look at all our doing, and he'll show us how our being was the most powerful tool in his hands."

What is the difference between "being" and "doing" things for God?



Chapter Five: **Hope Beyond a Quivering Soul**

There are a lot of things that can steal our boldness.

- The fear of saying or doing the wrong thing
- When the enemy questions, “Who do you think you are?”
- That moment when we know what to do but are unsure how it will be received, so we remain silent

One of the worst things we can do as Bible teachers or ministry leaders or as women in general is to tell the world that we never struggle with these feelings. We all walk the trenches of interpersonal relationships. We all have to work through disagreements. We all have to work through conflict or hurt from time to time. And we don’t always know the best thing to do.

Let’s just be honest.

There are things that try to strip away our boldness, and it’s a real battle.

WHAT STEALS YOUR BOLDNESS?

Years ago I had a disagreement with someone I cared about. I didn’t ask for the disagreement. I didn’t see it coming. At the end of the conversation, this person said, “Wow. Just think. You’re in ministry.”

I walked away battered.

For days, I rehashed that conversation. I agonized over the fact that it didn’t resolve, and I

held those words close.

Just think. You're in ministry.

It was a judgment. I fell short. If I were wiser, more spiritual, more discerning, less hurt, I would have been able to magically fix what went wrong. I wished I had gone to the Lord directly rather than carry this alone for such a long time. When I did go to my Heavenly Father, I sensed there were a few things I needed to do.

The first was to examine my part in this situation. I asked God to show me how I could have handled this differently.

Second, I needed to set healthy expectations for future conversations with this person.

Third, it was time to let this go. God had work for me to do. In order to do that, I had to address the real culprit. One bad conversation had wedged into the spiritual halls of my heart. When I sat down to study the Bible, or write, like I'm doing right now with you, the enemy slipped in to accuse me.

Who are you to write about living free?

The accusation was this: If you were a "real" Christian, you wouldn't have struggled so much with this. If you were a "real" Christian, you would have dealt with it on day one. If you were a "real" Christian, you would bow out of telling anybody about living free until you do this perfectly.

Of course, none of these are true.

How many times do we allow the enemy to use one situation or one person or one failure or mistake to derail us? The truth is that we discover how to live our faith as we experience these mountains. We grow as we climb over them. We mature spiritually as we learn where to turn. We become bold as we silence the enemy of our soul who wants nothing more than to distract and hinder our effectiveness.

Q: What is one tactic the enemy has used to steal your boldness?

A BOLD LIFE IS A SURRENDERED LIFE

Knowing what steals our boldness is key; so is knowing where to turn.

Read 2 Corinthians 3:5–6

Q: Paul, known as one of the boldest evangelists of all times, struggled at times with feelings of inadequacy. Where do we find what we need in those times?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SURRENDER?

To surrender is to relinquish control.

Q: Define *relinquish*, but in personal terms.

To relinquish something is not the same as giving up. It's surrender. Whether it's a dream or a goal, a hard situation, or that moment God asks you to do something and it feels iffy, we loosen our hold. We surrender to whatever it is that he asks us to do, and we trust him with the results.

A few days after that painful conversation, a friend and I were working on a project together. She lives several states away, so we chatted by video call. As we started, she said, "Suzie, God has put you on my heart. Is it okay if I tell you the words he spoke to me about you this morning?"

For the next few minutes, she reminded me of the deep love of God.

She told me that God had carved out a specific lane for me in ministry, and he was pleased

with my faithfulness. She paused. “Suzie, as I prayed for you, God showed me that you were running a race and you didn’t let hard things knock you out of the race. He loves that about you.”

I had to leave the conversation for a few seconds to find a box of tissues. Her sensitivity to the Holy Spirit was a gift. Her boldness was healing. She relinquished control and surrendered to the words God had placed on her heart. He took those words and anointed them and used them to lead me back to confidence.

To surrender is to trust him with the outcome.

We love happy endings, but the Bible is filled with stories that don’t seem to end well.

- Stephen boldly preached the truth, but was martyred for his bold words (Acts 7:54–60).
- Peter preached a bold sermon and went to jail (Acts 4:1–4).
- Jesus boldly shared his mission statement, and was pushed to the edge of a high cliff (Luke 4:14–30).

It would be easy to see the downside of surrendering, for boldness sometimes carries a price. However, it also produces a harvest.

Boldness, when led by the Holy Spirit, is never in vain.

- Stephen boldly preached the truth, *and the glory of God was revealed.*
- Peter preached a bold sermon, *and thousands were saved.*
- Jesus boldly shared his mission statement, *and the world discovered that God loved them enough to send a Savior to rescue them.*

If the Holy Spirit is leading you to be bold in some way, trust him with the results. You might not see the entire picture until eternity, but we can rejoice that we are partnering with him.

Write a prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to help you live boldly.



Chapter Six:
We are Worth Fighting For

“Oh well, I guess that’s just how it is.”

She said these words when people took advantage of her. She said them when they wronged her over and over again. As her friend, it was hard to hear. She had blurred the line of loving others to include continual abuse.

In this chapter, we discover that the Holy Spirit fights for us *to* us, especially when our thought life leads us astray.

My friend was worth fighting for, but first she had to realize that for herself.

God had not led her to freedom in her faith, to throw open a door for people to take advantage of her, steal from her, or do her wrong.

Rather than say, “Oh well, that’s just the way it is,” what if she rephrased that to ask, “Heavenly Father, what do *you* want to happen in this situation?”

For most of us, it’s hard to identify with this story. Yet we each have our own areas where we need the Holy Spirit to fight *to* us for us.

Q: What is one area where you are sometimes tempted to give up?

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS IN YOUR CORNER

Read John 14:26

Q: John 14:26 describes the Holy Spirit as our Advocate. One definition for advocate is “someone who backs you up.” That means that they are in your corner. They believe in you. Not only that, they will go into battle with you.

Share three words that describe how you feel when someone backs you up.

When my girls were little, one of my daughters was timid while the other was tiny and scrappy. I went to pick them up in the church nursery one morning and I was shown a bite mark on my older daughter’s arm. A child had cornered her and bit her. She had stood in the corner, crying wordlessly, as the child sunk her teeth into her arm.

The nursery helper saw what was happening and hurried toward her. Suddenly, out of the blue, my younger daughter raced across the room and inserted herself between her sister and the biter. She was nearly half her size, but pushed the biter away and wrapped her arms around her sister.

Today, my girls are grown.

My older daughter has grown into a fierce woman of faith. My younger daughter is still tiny and a fighter, but now fights as one who helps others. My girls are still close. I have no doubt that both of them would have each other’s back. How much greater is the Holy Spirit in our corner! He’s sent from the Father. He speaks in our defense. He’s got our back as he comes alongside us. He promises to be with us always (John 14:16), whether we are against the wall or standing with our arms raised high, worshiping God as our Victor. He advocates with the Father when we sin (1 John 2:1). He helps when we don’t have the words to pray (Romans 8:26).

Q: In what way do you need the Advocate to fight for you? Invite him into the battle.

FIGHTING FOR OTHERS

We first admit that we are worth fighting for. Then we invite the Holy Spirit to serve as our Advocate. We never go into battle alone. We call out for comfort, for counsel, for direction, and for the Holy Spirit to come into our corner.

Then we fight for others.

My friend, the one who used to say, “That’s just how it is,” has started to realize that she’s worth fighting for. She knows where to go, and how to call out for the Helper. She’s not afraid to admit that there are areas that God is still working in her. The more she understands that she is worth fighting for, the more she fights for others.

She gets it. She has walked in their shoes.

While others may look down at that one, she knows the battle. She has empathy, but even greater, she has spiritual assertiveness. It compels her to lead that person to view her battle differently, just like God did for her. She’s gentle. She’s affirming, but she’s not afraid to tell her own story and how she has been changed.

If you know of someone in a battle, and they have given up:

1. Pray for that person
2. Share your story, as the Holy Spirit leads
3. Remind her that she is worth fighting for, and is loved like crazy

Describe how your past battles help you fight for others today.



Chapter Seven: **We Will Know What to Do**

Cynicism is a jagged edge of distrust that sneaks in. When it shows up, it's often hard to discern at first. We may feel justified in being snarky, because that other person's views are so outdated or ridiculous. We want to be heard. We point fingers. We feel safest as we talk in groups of people who think just like us, because . . . well, because they are right. Just like us. We throw out comments on social media. We engage in endless debates to nowhere. Or we revert to silence, or withdraw because cynicism exacts a price. We start to view the world as "us versus them."

No one wins when cynicism takes root in the heart of believers.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy is that the unbeliever is watching.

Cynicism is doubt on steroids. I've struggled with it. I love God with all my heart, but there are times that situations have caused me to shake my head.

Why are they saying that? Do they realize that people are seeing that post, that joke, that opinion?

I don't know what to do, for silence feels like apathy, and yet debate is futile. I want to start a dialogue but feel misunderstood when I do. The whole time, cynicism wages war.

Direction can be a place to go or a thing we are supposed to do, but the direction of our thoughts is just as key.

It may be cynicism, but it could also be unresolved anger or hatred. It might be that tempting thought that you entertain, all the while knowing that it grieves the heart of your heavenly Father.

Q: Describe a time your thoughts took you in the opposite direction of where you wanted to go.

Q: We often focus on direction as a place. Why is the direction of our thoughts just as important?

THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL REDIRECT OUR THOUGHTS

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:19

Q: What does it mean to stifle or quench something?

The Holy Spirit speaks to us by bringing the Word to life. He speaks to us through mature and seasoned believers. He speaks to us through encouragers and teachers and even little children. He's relentless when we are lost, trying to lead us back where we belong.

Do we listen?

In 1 Thessalonians 5:19, we are encouraged not to quench the work of the Holy Spirit. That means:

- Don't stifle
- Don't suppress
- Don't argue or offer excuses
- Don't turn him away
- Don't grieve him by ignoring him

When we sense the Holy Spirit leading us in a new direction in our thought life, we have the option of doing all of these.

What do we miss out on if we quench the Holy Spirit?

If our thought life is not where it needs to be, it divides. It's confusing. There's a negative impact on those watching my life.

The Holy Spirit offers spiritual GPS.

Oh Suz, can't you see you are heading in the wrong direction?. Let's recalculate. The Word offers direction. Have you checked there? You know what to do. You know where to go. If not, then ask me. I'll show you.

Q: Where do you go for help when your thoughts are racing in the wrong direction?

If you are struggling with the direction of your thoughts, you have two choices: Stay stuck, or ask for help.

Remember that the Holy Spirit is in your corner. He knows your heart. He fights for you. He sees the race set out in front of you and the barrier that is in the way.

Don't just ask for help, but follow his leading. It may take time, but your thoughts will be renewed and redirected, and you will find your way *home*.



Chapter Eight: We Recognize What Is Unseen

Fake news. That's a phrase that didn't exist until recently. If we heard a news report, we usually believed it. After all, journalism required sources, research, and fine-tuned examination.

Now that fake news is here, we don't know who to believe!

More than ever, we must examine a source before we share it on social media, lapse into fear because of it, or are tempted to share it as fact.

Fake news is "news" that is originated for a purpose.

The purpose is to divide, to sway to a certain way of thinking through manipulation, to build someone up under false pretenses, or to tear a person down under false pretenses. It's wise to be skeptical. To track news, especially on social media, to its source. To test it. When we do that, we are able to sort through it to find what is true and then move on.

SPIRITUAL FAKE NEWS

Imagine a wise, elderly man. He's walked the trenches of faith. He's felt the cold metal of chains around his ankles and wrists. He leans in, his soft voice gentle but commanding.

"Don't be gullible," he says. "Don't accept everything you hear."

And you listen, because he seems to care deeply about you. He's invested in your faith community with his time and teaching. He's come to the church to warn everyone that there are people who are sharing fake news. They are twisting words to manipulate. Some have evil intent, but mixed in are good people with good motives but poor instincts or information.

That elderly man talking is John, the disciple.

In John 4, he's warning believers about fake news. He's telling them to test people and their message to see whether it is from God or not.

Read 1 John 4:1-6

To *test* means "to examine, scrutinize, to see if something is genuine." It's the same word used when testing a metal like gold.

Q: What is the importance of testing a message that feels "almost true," but not quite?
Or when a person seems great on the exterior, but you feel there's something not right about them?

Read Acts 17:11

In Acts 17:11, Paul is teaching a message. He's legit, but these individuals study his words for themselves. They aren't willing to be spoon-fed. They want to examine what he is saying.

Q: Why is it important to study Scripture or a teaching for yourselves, even if the teacher is someone you trust?

Q: On page 139 of *The Spirit-Led Heart*, it reads, “Discernment searches the truth. It knows the truth. It lives the truth.” Describe a time you felt a nudge from the Holy Spirit that something wasn’t right, and how you responded. Why was that important? (We won’t always know the answer to this question.)

SEARCH, KNOW, LIVE

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22

In almost every book of the New Testament, authors warn readers of false prophets. It’s clear that we have an enemy who desires to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). We aren’t without a Helper! First Thessalonians 5:19–22 shares four ways we can walk in truth.

1. Listen

Don’t stifle his voice. Don’t make excuses when you sense his leading you in a different direction, or asking you to test the source. Trust that the Holy Spirit sees what you might not.

2. Judge wisely

There’s a difference between living in constant judgment and judging wisely. One is looking for error or wrong in every person you meet. The other is weighing something as it unfolds and testing it when you sense something isn’t right. A person who judges wisely reads the Scriptures for herself daily. She studies God’s Word. She isn’t willing to take all of her spiritual nourishment from others. She understands that people are imperfect. They make mistakes, just like her. She’s not afraid to test and examine a doctrine or teaching or even her own beliefs, because she believes the Word teaches, reproves, strengthens, and grows her faith (2 Timothy 3:16).

3. *Hold on to what is good; let go of what is evil*

This advice allows you to keep going. It's two-fisted faith. One fist holds on to what is good. The other releases what is not. You don't have to remain stuck. You don't have to try to fix it. You keep going, doing what God has called you to do.

Q: How do these three principles from 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22 help you avoid what is fake, and live confidently in what is true?



Chapter Nine:
**We Love Our Faith,
But We Also Live Our Faith**

The teens stood on stage, a spotlight shining on them. They were dressed in costume. The music was cued. They executed the drama perfectly, and the audience was in tears. As we strolled down the hallways of the church afterward, I couldn't help but notice that some of the teens shed their witness as quickly as they did their costumes.

We were at the end of a long summer-ministry tour. They were tired, and a handful bickered with one another over little things. One girl was noticeably left out of the group again. Another said something truly unkind about someone in the audience.

As a youth volunteer for almost two decades, I loved them. There was lots of grace as they grew into spiritual maturity. Yet that night, we needed to talk. Faith is more than a feeling. It's more than being a member of a church. Faith is definitely deeper than putting on a show.

Faith impacts who we are, whether on stage or in everyday life.

While it's easy to share a story about a group of teens who are still figuring out personal faith, I confess that I too struggle when the Holy Spirit points to a work-in-progress area in my own life.

Like when someone close to my heart hurts me, and I need to work through forgiveness.

Like when I'm holding tight to something, and God asks me to put it down.

Like that moment when I say something snarky and uncalled for, and he calls me on it.

FAITH PENETRATES

Read Acts 2:44

In Acts 2:44, Peter has just preached an incredible sermon. Three thousand new believers are added to the church! The disciples work day and night to teach these converts. They pray with them, and take Communion (Acts 2:40–42). Wonders and signs take place (verse 43).

Sounds like an amazing church, right?

This is a church that most of us would love to be a part of. Their faith isn't limited to the temple, but saturates their day-to-day life. It even influences their financial choices. Some had a little. Some had enough. Some had an abundance. All of them held their possessions lightly as they looked to the common good of the entire body of Christ.

As I read their story, this thought struck me: I am a part of a church like this. I am a part of the body of Christ.

Do I live this way?

- Do I hold everything I own loosely?
- Does my faith penetrate my everyday life?
- Is everything I have available to God to use as he desires?
- Do I consider the common good of others, or am I constantly worried about me?

These are hard questions to ask, yet the answers help us to live abundantly (John 10:10b)—in a way that has nothing to do with money or things or position.

Pause for a moment and gently ask these questions for yourself. Share your answers below.

Don't beat yourself up if the answer isn't what you want it to be. This is a healthy way to evaluate where you are, and where you long to grow in your faith. Anticipate what the Holy Spirit is trying to give you as you do!

Read Acts 2:46–47

Q: Describe how faith affected these believers emotionally and spiritually. Which of these attributes do you long for in your own faith walk?

TURN AROUND

Read Acts 2:38

The word *repent* means “to turn around.”

We make a U-Turn in the way we think. In how we live. In the way we view what is important. In the ways we invest our time and gifts.

This type of repentance should never lead to condemnation, but the hope of redirection.

We ask the Holy Spirit to help us turn around, and he hears that cry (Romans 8:26–27). In order to make a U-Turn, we:

1. Acknowledge that we are headed in the wrong direction.

This is a strong spiritual move. We take our eyes off of what we do, what we have or don't have, who we are or are not. We look at those things we are holding more tightly than Christ and release our grip.

In what ways do you sense the Holy Spirit asking you to make a U-Turn?

2. *Adjust the mirror.*

What we constantly look at and consume influences our convictions.

The competition for our attention is overwhelming. It's easy to get caught up in a culture that tells us what is more important than our faith. It's tempting to allow culture to tell you what is beautiful or worthy of our time.

We can get snared in cultural definitions and expectations and become spiritually blind as to what has eternal value (1 John 2:16). We can spend a lot of time on things that won't matter in the long run but take huge chunks of our time in the present. The Holy Spirit convicts us because God has more for us.

What is your greatest competition for your attention?

3. *Exchange immediate gratification for what is lasting.*

We often hear stories of older men and women who say, "If I could do it differently, I would . . ." Then they list things that consumed them or robbed them of time but held little reward in the end. Some of their regrets may sound like this:

- I wish I had invested in people over money or material goods.
- I wish I had slowed down to appreciate the beauty all around me rather than rushing through life.
- I wish I had appreciated my loved ones rather than taking them for granted.

In almost every instance, they wish they had forsaken immediate gratification for what holds meaning in the long run.

Exchanging immediate gratification for what lasts doesn't mean that we live in a bubble. It doesn't mean that we consider rest or watching a movie or taking a nap as wrong (I love a good nap!). It means we weigh what consumes us, and if it's found wanting, we give it a lot less priority.

Consider what consumes your time. What is the effect? If it's not what you want it to be, pray about that. Make a plan. The Holy Spirit helps us live what we believe. It frees us from a rule-bound life as we walk and live by the Spirit.

What consumes my time, thought, energy	The effect	If the effect is negative, list ways to give this less priority



Chapter 10: **Good Gifts Make Us Stronger**

As I drove into the parking area, I slowed down to avoid the throngs of people walking by. They carried kids, fold-up chairs, and blankets. It was half an hour before the fireworks show, and it appeared that thousands had shown up.

When this pastor decided to throw an Independence Day celebration for the entire community, all that many could see were the obstacles. He persevered. He presented the vision to the church. He talked with those who were concerned about the cost or the details. He prayed for helpers, and they showed up in droves.

Ten years later that same celebration still takes place.

I'm still amazed every time I go. The crowds have been as large as 10,000. It's a safe place for families and their children to come on this special day. There are pony rides and bouncy houses and worship and grand fireworks. At the end, the gospel is presented to people who may never show up on a Sunday.

While this pastor felt God had led him to this idea, it took a huge measure of faith to see it through. It was bigger than what he had in the natural. That measure of faith stood firm as he held tight to the dream through the rocky places. It helped him as he worked through budgets and details, and gently spoke with those who thought it was foolish. While some didn't fully understand how pony rides and bouncy houses and fireworks could be used to impact a community, he knew that God did, and that was enough.

GOOD GIFTS

Read 1 Corinthians 12:8–11

Q: How do all of these gifts, working together, build the church?

Q: Is one gift more desirable than the other? Why or why not?

Q: Good gifts don't reflect those who receive them. They reflect the Giver. What do these good gifts tell us about the Holy Spirit?

ASK FOR GOOD GIFTS

Lately, I've felt God asking me to be a leader.

Oh, Suzie, that's easy.

Maybe it is to you, but it's not my natural gifting. When I first sensed God asking me to lead, I said yes with a hammering heart.

Then I picked up some leadership books. I started spending time with and learning from leader types. I listened to leadership podcasts.

All of these are good, but they fall short if I don't turn to the Helper first.

I know you have good gifts, and that the purpose is to build the church. As I am compelled to lead, fill me. My hands are wide open for anything you have for me.

The Holy Spirit is in us.

Through his gifts at work through us, he becomes apparent to the world around us. It's always been his role to draw a world to faith in believers.

In Chapter 1 of *The Spirit-Led Heart*, these roles of the Trinity were simplified to:

- God loves us.
- Jesus rescued us.
- The Holy Spirit helps us.

Further, God's love was obscured when sin entered the picture.

He sent his Son who lived, died, and rose so that we could walk freely into God's love.

The Holy Spirit helps us live so that others are drawn to that freedom.

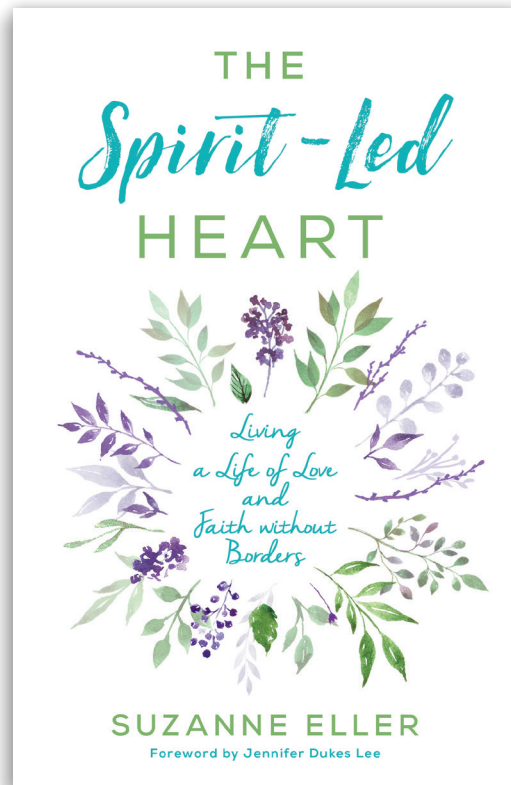
You are the church. I'm the church. If there are gifts that help us partner with God in loving the world, let's not shy away from them. Let's not pick them apart or call one better than the other.

Instead, let's seek the Giver and ask him to provide what we need. We do so praising God, for the goal of the Holy Spirit's work is to construct Jesus' nature and character in us, and do the work of the Father through us.

Take your eyes off the gifts.

Thank the Giver who lives inside of you for his good gifts.

Receive what you need.



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