

Time of Grace Ministry
The Spirit Works for Me Creating Faith
2 Timothy 3:10-17
August 5, 2018

Pastor Michael Novotny

Don't forget about the Holy Spirit. Learn more from Pastor Jeske of why the Holy Spirit is so important for your faith.

Pastor Mark Jeske

How many of you know the name Christina Rossetti? Does that name ring a bell to anybody? She was a poet in England in the Victorian era. "Who has seen the wind? Neither you nor I, but when the trees bow down their heads the wind is passing by." How true! You cannot see wind; you just see its effect on the things around it. In fact, Christina Rossetti, I think, partially stole her ideas for that little poem from some words of Jesus. In John 3, Jesus told some very puzzled people the Holy Spirit blows like the wind wherever he pleases. You can't see it; you only see the effects. You see the effect that the Spirit has on people.

And it pleases the Spirit to be so quiet and indirect. I don't pray directly to the Holy Spirit a lot and I think one of the reasons – I think there's two main reasons; probably more than that – but there's two main reasons for that. One, of course, is the Spirit's really hard to visualize. Who has seen the wind? And you know what else? Here's the second reason why I admit that I don't often pray directly to the Spirit as I might, and in fact, I would like to. And that's I haven't heard his voice in the Scripture. We've heard the Father's voice: "This is my son whom I love; in him I am well-pleased," he boomed out from heaven. The Father's voice is all over; you can hear him talking to you. Jesus' voice is really all over the Bible. In fact, you open the gospels and it's a sea of red ink. But there is very little in Scripture where it says directly, "and the Spirit said."

The book of Revelation probably has the most. The letters to the seven churches are in the voice of the Spirit and the very ending of the Bible has the Spirit's voice saying one word to you. In fact, it summarizes his mission. The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." We do hear the Spirit's voice; just not coming to us quite in the way we think. The wind passing through the trees is talking to us. Would you open your Bible or uncrate your mobile device to 2 Timothy 3 and I'd like to read that last paragraph with you.

I'd invite you to think of yourself in paradoxical terms like Paul; both humble – Paul had started his religious activity as an adult, as a persecutor of Christianity. How did he ever forget the shame of what a jerk and an idiot he was in his younger years? That kept his tongue soft. But he also was aware that God was using him and he gives Timothy nine things to imitate in his life. "You, however, know all about my teaching." Keep it going. Don't let it stop. "My way of life." The tone I use when I explain the gospel to people. My flexibility of meeting people

where they're at. "My patience" in explaining things in language they will understand. Number three: "My purpose." I want my mission to be your mission and articulate that clearly.

Number four: "My faith." Patience is a hard thing to learn. Paul's older years have taught him that not everything happens right away. That sometimes you dig and dig and dig and you plant and plant and plant and water and water and water and sometimes, it's years or even decades before there's a harvest, there's a crop growing up there.

Number six: "Love." As God has loved us, having an attitude of unconditional love toward people that you don't pre-judge them; that you simply show God's love and let people know they're valuable first. You don't try to tune people up and straighten them out and fix all their dysfunctions of life before you share the gospel. You share the gospel first. Number eight and nine: "Persecutions and sufferings." Man, what happened to me in Antioch! He was driven out of Antioch and expelled. And Iconium; there was a plant to stone them and they had to leave town early. "Lystra," Timothy's hometown, Paul literally was stoned. He was left for dead. He was surrounded by people who thought they had killed him. What do you – what do you suppose that experience was like as the rocks and stones are slamming into your body?

"But the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ will be persecuted, while evil men and women and imposters will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." That's our life, too! "But as for you, continue in what you've learned and become convinced of because you know those from whom you learned it." You might think well, there he means Paul and that'd be true. Did I not demonstrate to you from my character and the way I lived that I was authentic? I was not manipulating people. I was here to give you things from God's word; not to take from you. I didn't use you; I was God's broker to give you things.

But as he's saying, "Remember from whom you heard it." He wasn't referring just to Paul. You know who else he was referring to? "From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." And this is where Timothy heard the word of God for the first time. And it's a shocking word! Where did he first hear about God's love for him? On his mother's lap. In high school? No. Middle school? No. Primary school? No. Kindergarten? Earlier than that! Toddlerhood? Nope, earlier than that. From infancy. From infancy! He met his God held close in his mother's arms where she had that good food that made him feel so good. His mother's smell; she had the momma smell that made him feel safe. The warmth, physical warmth, of that embrace. Her murmur of her voice is where he learned about God and the Spirit of the Lord worked through her and converted his heart through the word of God. And you might say, "Man, you can't grasp anything about God until you're in high school, at least." Not according to this verse: "From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures." Bit by bit, the Spirit touched his heart and converted him.

"How from infancy you've known the Holy Scriptures," and what can they do? "They are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." They are powerful enough – it is enough to be the connector to the Savior whose blood has washed us clean and whose love promises us the forgiveness, the favor of God, and immortality that you and I crave and must have; that we cannot generate for ourselves. From infancy, thank you Eunice. Thank you, Lois.

And now, their love was being passed on to Timothy and through Timothy to many other people. We almost nothing about his spiritual activities; perhaps he will have stories to tell us in heaven.

Why is that power there and how does it get there? How do we become believers? Verse 16 has the answer: “Because all Scripture is God-breathed.” The breath of the Lord in the pages of Scripture is the Holy Spirit and that’s how you do hear the Spirit’s voice because everything in the Bible is the Spirit talking to you. The Spirit is the inspirer of the word. Peter wrote: “Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” to guarantee the content that’s in there. Don’t be fooled that it has human authors; the content is provided and guaranteed by God. It provides the authority so that you don’t have to say, “Well yeah, Paul said that but who is he? Some chauvinistic dude from the first century? That was then; this is now.” No, it has not only the content you need, it has the authority you need to put your trust in and essentially step out over the cliff and know that there’s a pathway there for you to walk on. It gives you a rock solid foundation for the faith in things you cannot see. That’s why this is such a big deal; the Spirit guarantees the content. The Spirit guarantees the authority. And the Spirit guarantees the usefulness of it. Not only does it connect you to Christ, but it’s useful!

Useful for four things: “Teaching.” Not suggestions but helping people, especially children from young on, know why they exist and the reason for their existence. “Rebuking;” that you can tell the difference between right and wrong. “Correcting;” that you can show the better way to live; the way of God. As Paul mentioned those nine things at the beginning of this paragraph, live like this; only the Scripture can tell you that. Otherwise, people grope around on their own and they have to come up with their own value system. That word “value,” absolutely drives me crazy because just saying, “Well, those are my values,” means absolutely nothing. That just means that’s what I want or that’s what I like. What if one of my corporate values is charge as much as you can get away with? What if one of my personal values is it’s not a lie if you don’t get caught? What if one of my values is make as much money as you can as fast as you can and don’t worry who gets hurt in the process. That’s a value, isn’t it? That’s somebody’s operating philosophy of life. The word “value” is a nothing word; it just means whatever you want it life.

Scripture helps you align with God’s values. God’s values are everything. What you and I may come up with, we might be so – have our heads so screwed on backwards we don’t even know how abusive or hurtful we’re being. God’s values are good for people. They’re good for “correcting and then training in righteousness.” Why? Not only so we can get to heaven someday, which is a big deal, but that we have usefulness right here and now so that men and women of God may be “thoroughly equipped for every good work.” So the Scripture not only helps you understand where you came from, helps connect you, reconnect you to God, re-sever – reknit up that severed connection – but it also gives you something to do other than view planet earth as a gigantic waiting room where you sit around killing time waiting to go to heaven. You’ve got work to do right now.

And the church is at its best not when it hides in a cave waiting for like the nuclear holocaust to blow over, trying just to survive and take care of myself. But rather, to think of ourselves as medics in a MASH unit where we are rescuing the wounded, the carnage and wreckage from Satan’s trashing of the human race, where we are the litter bearers and the ambulance drivers to help the wounded and help them find healing and give them some hope and get them out of

danger and bring them back and start patching them up. That is when the church and we, as individuals, are at our best; when we are confident in the power of this message. Because the Spirit is talking to us with information we need, with the authority and certainty that we need, and with the power to be useful. For even though these are God's words, when they come out of your mouth they're still God's words. When you speak God's words, they cease to be just your words; they are God's words, too.

So what? Let me wrap this up with three Pentecost challenges for you today to honor the Holy Spirit and to help him in his sales work, you might say; to help him in his customer interface. Number one: Appreciate what has been done for you. You didn't make yourself a believer; you were a mess that got rescued, no matter what age. And it's a miracle at any age. You might say it's miraculous that someone from infancy could hear the Scriptures and get the slightest thing out of it. I'll say yes, it is a miracle!

But you know what else is a miracle? A grown-up coming to faith because by the time you're a grown-up, you've got a hundred great excuses to blow this off and do something else. It's a miracle to be converted at any age, including – I told you before about the guy; still can't get this image out of my head; I cannot un-see this – the guy I baptized at age 75 in his hospital bed who died three days later. That's cutting it a little close; I don't advise that. But it's a miracle at any age. Appreciate that miracle and thank the Spirit today. Envision talking to the flame or talking to the bird; whatever works for you. Or just send it up care of the Holy Trinity and the prayers will get home and thank him for that.

Second, continue in it! It's hard to be a witness for the Lord if you don't know what you're talking about. Continue in what you have been taught, Paul wrote to Timothy. You've been to my personal traveling seminary but you need to stay in the word so the Spirit can keep talking to you. As a correction on you, the word of God calls us back, rebukes us when we're being stupid, corrects us and sets us on our right path and trains us in righteous thinking to get the right tone and the right way to speak to one another. Continue in that word; don't give it up. Do what you're doing right now; be in the word. Be in it personally; be in it in small groups.

And thirdly, continue to use it and have no fear. The fact that you may experience some rejection should just make you smile. Remember, people's problem is not with you; it's with your Boss. You're just the messenger; don't shoot the messenger. And the only reason you would ever speak any words of the gospel to someone is because you love them and you'd like to spend eternity with them. You're not trying to manipulate people or get more paying customers for your congregation. It's because you would like to enjoy eternity with people and that eternity comes through the work of the Holy Spirit who uses word and washing to reconnect the lost with him.

Come, Holy Spirit! Live in our hearts and be on our tongues today and always, Amen.

Pastor Michael Novotny

Thanks, Pastor Jeske, for those great words about the Holy Spirit. I remember a few years ago teaching a Bible class on the Holy Spirit when a man who was brand new to church looked at me

and said, "I kind of feel bad for the Spirit." It's like God gets all this glory and Jesus gets all that credit and, well in his words, the Holy Spirit was like the bass player in the band; necessary but easily forgotten.

But what if we didn't treat the Spirit that way? What if we talked to the Spirit today? What if we prayed directly and personally to the Spirit? What if we asked the Spirit to produce in us what only he can: The fruit of love and of joy and of peace and of gentleness and respect and self-control. Let's join together in worshipping, not just the Father and the Son, but the Holy Spirit, too.

Pastor Mark Jeske

Would you join me in going to the Holy Spirit himself today in a word of prayer?

Dear Holy Spirit, without you, none of us could see Jesus. We couldn't see how merciful, how gracious, how forgiving and how amazing he is. We would try to impress you with our own works instead of relying the great things that he has already done for us at the cross. We would think that getting to heaven was a ladder that we needed to climb instead of a gift that you'd just given in Jesus' name. And so, we thank you for doing what we can't. We thank you for creating faith and we thank you for keeping faith alive in our hearts.

And now, Holy Spirit, we ask you to do something even more: To make us the most loving people on our block, the gentlest people in our family, the most respectful and self-controlled and giving people in our community. We just don't want to call on the name of Jesus and stay inside our homes; we want to go out into this world and show them the amazing glory of God. So help us, Holy Spirit. Free us from our sins and fill us with the fruit of the Spirit, as the apostle Paul talks about in your word.

We ask all these things humbly - not because we're good and we deserve it - but because you're good and you love to answer these prayers. So we come to you, Spirit, all in Jesus' name, Amen.

With Time of Grace, I'm Pastor Mike Novotny, and it all starts now.