

### Staying Online

My kids were coming back from DC on Friday night. Three of them are living there (one with a spouse) and all four of them were journeying back in separate cars to be home for Father's Day weekend. They were home all Friday night and Saturday and then went on to Cleveland last night to be with my dad. I'm going there this afternoon to join my mom and dad for a celebration. It's always great to have the kids home.

My 21 year old daughter, Cate, though is famous for getting lost on the road and so she's coming back with a girlfriend and the two of them are driving along and I get this cell phone call that says, "Hey Dad, I'm supposed to be on Rt 66 S, right?" And I said, "Oh no, Cate! That is the wrong road going the wrong direction! You're going down to Southern Virginia..." So, we got her talked off and she stopped at a gas station and then we heard this voice in the background saying "Oh, young lady, you go here and then you go to this stop sign and then SHSHSHSHS..... The cell phone is dead. Gone.

And right at that point – now Becca is always thinking the worst is happening to our kids – all we know is that we have two young girls in a car on their way home and this guy is talking to them on the side of the road. And Bec's thinking "Oh no, they're in trouble!" We couldn't get them back; the cell phone wouldn't work. So, about ten minutes later, I go and find my cell phone which has a little better connectivity and call Cate again. I get her on the phone and she says, "Oh, I'm okay, Dad, I'm okay. But Dad, you aren't going to believe this! There's a tornado out there!" And then she says, "But it's behind me, Dad!" You know, all my life, I've wanted to see a tornado. She actually saw a funnel cloud! I don't know *how* my daughter gets into these kinds of things. So she's being chased around Northern Virginia by some funnel cloud. And then, right then, SHSHSHSH..... gone! The cell phone is gone again. I go, "Oh! Okay." Anyway, Cate and her friend did finally make it home.

You know, in the hardest times in life, in the most important moments, you want to make sure the connection is clear, don't you? Moms and dads sure value that with their kids. Our Heavenly Father sure values that with us. He wants to make sure the connection is clear. I want to talk to you about keeping a clear connection with the Holy Spirit this morning.

*"If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."*

Gal 5:25 (ESV)

What Paul means there is if it is by the Holy Spirit that you have new life and a new heart and new forgiveness and a new sense of strength in your life to follow the Lord, how do you keep the connection clear? How do you stay online? This is an important question.

We're in this series on the Holy Spirit - Living Supernaturally, we're calling it – and this morning we're going to focus on keeping that connection clear.

I want to **say two things** to you about keeping the connection clear. One is that you have to be filled with the Spirit to keep the connection clear. The other is that you have to be led by the Spirit to keep that connection clear. Let's take them one at a time...

#### 1) Let the Spirit Fill You

That is the promise of Jesus... that he will fill you with his Spirit.

John the Baptist said that "he who came after me" will baptize not just in water but will baptize with the fire of God, the Holy Spirit of the Lord. That was his promise. So, they waited. And on the day of Pentecost, he delivered his promise – they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. The promise is connected to your

conversion. The promise is to all who believe in Jesus Christ, that they will be filled with the Holy Spirit. That is his gift (his “new birthday gift,” so to speak) to you.

*“Don’t be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, let the Holy Spirit fill and control you.”*

Eph 5:18 (NLT)

I’m interested in Paul saying it this way because I think what Paul is saying is that there is this God-shaped hole in every human heart. We’re always trying to fill that hole with things that don’t work. It might be drunk with wine; it might be drugs; it might be pleasures; it might be a regular trip to the shopping mall as though that’s going to fill the hole in our heart. The hole was made for the Holy Spirit and nothing else will work, in the end.

**“let the Holy Spirit...”** He is even more interested in filling us that we are being filled... we just need to get out of the way and open the door. His promise is that he will do it.

I grew up on a 25-acre farm in Northern Ohio. At the bottom of all these fields, the fields had been tiled long before we moved onto that farm, and the tiles all emptied into a drainage pond which was full of bluegill when I was a little boy that we’d fish all the time. When I was 11 or 12 we enlarged the pond to four or five times as big as the old pond with just a wall of mud separating them. I can still remember the day when the backhoe took out that wall of mud; we boys just loved that river flowing from one pond to another. And then the new pond began to fill up. But it would only go so high. The rains came and the water came in okay but it wouldn’t go any higher. Finally we had to call the guys back who built the pond for us and we did some soil testing. We found out that we didn’t have much clay in our soil and the water was just running right through the soil. **The pond leaked. You leak!** God pours his Holy Spirit into you and you leak! We leak all the time. Matter of fact, the Bible talks a little bit about how we leak...

- **You can quench the Holy Spirit**

By not paying attention to what the Spirit is doing in your life... or by not using the gifts of the Spirit or by not following the leadings of the Spirit, you tend to take a bucket of water and throw it on the fire of the spirit.

*“Do not put out the Spirit’s fire...”*

1 Th 5:19

You can do that if you aren’t careful. You don’t want to do that. You want to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

- **You can resist the Holy Spirit**

People who do that are going against what the Spirit is telling them to do. His spirit says go this way, his scripture says go this way and you turn around and decide to turn around and go that way! So you resist the Holy Spirit and when you resist the Holy Spirit, you leak. You’ll never be filled by the Holy Spirit if you resist the Holy Spirit.

*“You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!”*

Acts 7:51

It’s possible for the religious authorities to resist the Holy Spirit. It’s possible for normal folks like us to resist the Holy Spirit. You don’t want to do that.

- **You can ask for the Holy Spirit**

This is a good verse for Father’s Day weekend. Jesus was talking to the dads here:

*“If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”* Luke 11:13

Jesus is saying that us Dads... as imperfect as we are (“evil” – he’s rather a straight-talker), if we know how to give good things to our kids – that’s what we do, we want to provide for our kids; its built into our DNA – if that’s the way we are, even twisted and bent inside, how much more will our heavenly father give us the most important things in life if we ask him? Jesus says specifically the Holy Spirit. The answer, of course, is very, very, very much more. He loves to give the Holy Spirit to the followers of his son, Jesus Christ.

*“let the Holy Spirit fill and control you.” Eph 5:18 (NLT)*

You don’t want to quench it or resist it. You want to come back again and again and ask Jesus to fill you again and again with his Holy Spirit.

## 2) Let the Spirit Lead You

This is something that is essential to our faith in Christ. Paul says...

*“The true children of God are those who let God’s Spirit lead them.”*

Rom 8:14 (NCV)

This isn’t a secondary add-on component of your faith with the Lord, this is core stuff in your faith. When Paul says to let God’s Spirit “lead” you, or when he says to “walk” in the Spirit, what he means is that we should yield everything within us to the Holy Spirit wants to do in us. This past Wednesday night we spent some time taking a survey on this, on what parts of the Holy Spirit’s work we were ready to say “yes” to in our lives. I’ve developed that survey a little bit more and want to walk through it with you this morning... go through this and answer the questions saying “yes, I’m willing” or “I’m ready to be made willing” (that’s how we are sometimes), or “no, I’m not yet willing”. The best answer, by the way, is an honest answer. Not one you think I want to hear... as you go through this survey, do a little business with the Lord. Make this an answer not just for you or for me, but most of all, for the Lord. That your answer would be a prayer to him.

## Grow a Character Like Christ’s

The Holy Spirit is committed to making you like Christ – that’s why we call him the *Holy* Spirit... If Jesus puts his Spirit in us, then He lives in us, and then **his character will live in us**, trying to work out through us! The question is, will you say yes to them?

*when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Gal 5:22-23*

Just a comment on the word “goodness”: there are so many of us who have been so deeply infected by the corruption of our culture. Wouldn’t you really love to have God’s goodness deep inside you, working all out through you?

How do you feel about the Holy Spirit doing this inside you? Make your mark... make it a prayer mark.

- Yes, I am willing.
- I’m ready to be made willing.
- No, I’m not yet willing.

## Understand What God Has Given Us

When the Holy Spirit lives inside you He begins to change your mind. That’s what the scriptures say. Your thoughts begin to change, your fantasies begin to change, your ability to understand scripture begins to change. I was a religion major in college; I could not understand the scriptures! Then, I got converted and God gave me his Spirit and it was like a fog lifted. That’s what happens.

*God has actually given us his Spirit (not the world’s spirit) so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us. 1 Cor 2:12*

Jay Armstrong shared a testimony at Sat@Six last night and talked about the season of his life before he turned his life over to Jesus. He said that in his own head, he was “too smart” to become a Christian. That was how he used to think. That’s a great phrase because maybe you’ve been there too. Too smart to become a Christian.

Peter Drucker, after he gave his life to Jesus Christ and became a follower of Jesus, he was asked why he converted to Christ. He said, “There is no better deal.” That’s what happens with the Holy Spirit gets ahead of your mind. He straightens out your thinking! You know now that you are too smart not to be a Christian. It’s the best deal on the face of the planet. I give up my sins and I get his forgiveness... that’s a good deal! I have to give up living life by myself – for my selfish little self – and I get to live my life for the God of the universe. It’s a great deal. I get to give up my weaknesses and get his strength. I give up a Christ-less eternity and I get heaven and Jesus. There is no better deal. That’s what happens when the Holy Spirit straightens out your thinking... light begins to shine.

How do you feel about the Holy Spirit doing this for you? Make your mark... make it a prayer mark.

- Yes, I am willing.
- I’m ready to be made willing.
- No, I’m not yet willing.

### Be Led Into Ministry Opportunities

Again and again over the years the Holy Spirit has whispered something to me, to go and do something, talk to somebody. “That person who’s interrupting your day, Geoff, spend some time with them. They are on my agenda for the day.” Every time I say yes to one of those leadings, almost without exception, it turns into a wonderful ministry opportunity. This happened all the time in the Bible...

*The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.” Acts 8:29*

I don’t know how the Spirit said that to Philip. My guess is it wasn’t an audible phrase that he heard with his ear. It was probably a sharp mental phrase that he immediately recognized inside his head. And he knew it was from the Spirit and he said yes. Do you know what resulted from that one encounter? In that chariot was a man from Ethiopia, who served in the royal court there. He was on his way home. Philip stuck up a conversation with him, and led him to Christ. The man believed and was converted and baptized! He went back to Ethiopia, and began to share his new faith in the courts of Ethiopia. That is how the Gospel first got to Africa! Because a normal guy (Philip) followed a leading of the Holy Spirit into a ministry opportunity. Extraordinary things can happen if you are willing to be led into ministry opportunities.

How do you feel about the Holy Spirit doing this with you? Make your mark... make it a prayer mark.

- Yes, I am willing.
- I’m ready to be made willing.
- No, I’m not yet willing.

### Desire and Use Supernatural Ministry Gifts

Some people get nervous about the supernatural ministry gifts that the Holy Spirit gives, but Paul had a different attitude. He said this...

*Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.*

1 Cor 14:1

Eagerly desire them because God can get things done with supernatural ministry gifts that you can never get done! God can open doors that are locked. He can turn hearts that are hard. His power is greater than our power. I was so nervous about some of the more spectacular gifts! I wasn’t so sure I wanted to speak in tongues. I wasn’t so sure about prophesy. I wasn’t so sure about healing. There were a lot of things that I wasn’t so sure about. But then something changed inside me. What changed was that I understood from the scriptures and I began to believe that **God is good**. He never gives bad gifts to his children. He’s a real

father; the best father in the whole universe. And this dad gives good gifts to his kids. And when I understood that, then I had to drop my objections and say, “Okay, Father, if you want me to have something, I want to have it! I really do believe you are good and you don’t give bad gifts.”

Could you say that to the Holy Spirit? What do you think? Make your mark... make it a prayer mark.

- Yes, I am willing.
- I’m ready to be made willing.
- No, I’m not yet willing.

### **Anoint and Use God-given Talents**

There is this great paragraph in the book of Exodus when they were building the Temple in the Old Testament. It is about a guy named Bezalel... God says...

*“See, I have chosen Bezalel... and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts— to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze...”* Exo 31:3

This was a guy with extraordinary natural abilities. Scripture says it was the spirit of God who gave them to him. And then, what happened was, the Spirit of God not only gave those things to him, but anointed those gifts, those natural talents. They became a wonderful use to the Lord. He offered them back to God. He was one of the chief craftsmen of the temple. That was what God did with him. That can happen to you. If you take the natural talents and abilities that God has given to you and you offer them back to God, He can anoint them with his Holy Spirit and then they can be of use like you’ve never seen them used before, for the Lord and for his purposes.

I wonder if you would say yes to the Holy Spirit about that... to anoint your natural giftings and use them for his purposes. Make your mark... make it a prayer mark.

- Yes, I am willing.
- I’m ready to be made willing.
- No, I’m not yet willing.

### **Led into Conflict with Satan**

Here’s a strange one. As soon as the Holy Spirit came down on Jesus in his baptism...

*Immediately the Holy Spirit compelled Jesus to go into the wilderness. He was there for forty days, being tempted by Satan.* Mark 1.12-13

The Spirit compelled him into conflict with Satan. Did you know that sooner or later you will **have to face Satan one on one**? Because something has to be settled in your life. Who the master of your soul is is a battle that has cosmic dimensions to it. And it has to be settled. And it will never be settled until you face down Satan. The purpose of your life will always be frustrated until you face down Satan and tell him he has no part of it. That’s what was happening with Jesus. Now Jesus didn’t have to go into that battle alone. The Spirit drove him and went with him. You don’t have to go into that battle alone, **the Spirit will go with you**, but that battle cannot be avoided.

That moment of battle **for me** was a sleepless night in my mid twenties. I was coming off years of drugs and promiscuity and rebellion. I had given my life to Jesus and was getting serious about walking with Jesus. I was in my bedroom alone. I awoke in terror late in the night and I was terrified. I’m going to tell you this story and I want you to hear it and take it seriously because I know what happened there. I was sure Satan was in the room with me. I was afraid to look out into the dark. I was frightened out of my wits. All I could do in the middle of that fear was repeat over and over and over again a verse that the Holy Spirit brought back to my memory. I’d committed it to memory and the Spirit brought it back to me right there, right then. From 1 John: “He who is in you [Jesus] is greater than he who is in the world [Satan].” I just kept saying it over and over again through a long, terrifying night. Ten minutes at a time, I got through that

night but in the morning, the issue was settled and I knew it. An important battle had been won. It wouldn't be the last time I'd be tempted by Satan, but an important milestone had been laid.

How do you feel about the Holy Spirit doing this with you? Helping you face Satan down and getting him out of your life? Make your mark... make it a prayer mark.

- Yes, I am willing.
- I'm ready to be made willing.
- No, I'm not yet willing.

**Speak God's Word Courageously**

Here's the last one I want to mention... The disciples had started to share their faith, and the religious leaders got in their face and forbade them from speaking any more in the name of Jesus. Ever had people do that with you? Do you know what they did? They spent some time in prayer. They went to God about it!

*After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. Acts 4:31*

God gives you his Spirit to make you his witness to the world! That's why he does it. We talk a lot about human rights in America and it's a very good thing to talk about. The fundamental God-given human right that God gives to every man and woman on the face of the planet is the right to hear about his love and his forgiveness and the change that Jesus can bring... the right to hear about the power of his spirit, the eternity before us and the hope of heaven that comes to us through Jesus Christ. You know how he carries that right out to everybody on earth? Through you.

How do you feel about the Holy Spirit doing this through you so that you can speak the word boldly and courageously? Make your mark... make it a prayer mark.

- Yes, I am willing.
- I'm ready to be made willing.
- No, I'm not yet willing.

You want to be filled by the Holy Spirit? Want to be led by the Holy Spirit? Are you ready to say "yes" to the Holy Spirit? Would you pray with me...