

Lord, Help Us!

February 22, 2026

Acts 1:4-8, John 14:25-29

I want you to hear what Jesus said again in Acts 1. Let me set the stage. He is getting ready to ascend into heaven. He has been with them about three years. In that time, Jesus did some pretty amazing things. He'd healed the sick. He calmed a storm. He outsmarted the religious leaders. He even raised the dead. They had a front row seat to all that. In John 14 he tells them that they will do even greater things than he has. Incredulous. They must have been stunned. How can that be? But... here he says to them.

"You will receive power... when the Holy Spirit comes to you; And you will be my witnesses..."

This is the work of the Holy Spirit. I wonder how many people think of the word "power" when they think of the Holy Spirit. To most of us, the Holy Spirit is this mysterious figure that we associate with Pentecost and speaking in tongues. As such, we tend to write it off. We mention it in terms of the trinity but then we let it go.

To be honest with you, I never took it seriously until 1995. I knew it was there but kind of forgot it. That's when I began meeting with some Pentecostal pastors for prayer. They helped me understand the power of the Holy Spirit for our faith life.

So let me begin by saying that very little can happen without the Holy Spirit in our faith life.

Too often we get frustrated when we develop a program in the church and it doesn't succeed. We put together a number of great resources, spend weeks planning and promoting the activity, and then wonder why it didn't go over as well as we had hoped. That's because it wasn't empowered through prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus once told the disciples that without him, they could do nothing.

It is the Holy Spirit that drives success in our ministry. It isn't having a great pastor. That helps but it is having a pastor who is filled with the Holy Spirit. It isn't having a great leader. That's wonderful but it's having a leader who's filled with the Holy Spirit that makes the difference.

The early church leaders were not learned men. They were ordinary people who accepted the call to follow Jesus. They learned from him, but even then, they still stumbled and fell. But after the resurrection, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, they became giants of the faith. That's what Jesus was talking about. No man or woman can truly lead if they aren't empowered by the Holy Spirit. Dr. A. W. Tozer, author and pastor, said,

"If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference."

That's an indictment on today's church. Tozier suggests that we have lost the sense of the importance of the Holy Spirit in our ministries. We can't be an effective witness without it.

This morning I want to talk about the work of the Holy Spirit and four things it does. But first, let me say that the Holy Spirit does have a personality as distinct as the Father and the Son. In John 14 the Spirit is called the Comforter. He is seen as one who comes to stand beside us in life. In times of trial, discomfort and persecution, He is our helper, our guide, our best friend when no one else is there. We often think of him as being Jesus, but Jesus' role was to serve as savior to bridge the gap between us and the Father. The Spirit is the one who walks with us now. Jesus says in John 16:7,

But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

I noted this in both our Monday morning study and in the Wednesday night Sermon Talk Back, we often interchange the members of the Trinity when we speak of them. We say "I've got Jesus in my heart" or "God is with me." If you want to be completely accurate theologically, in both cases, we are talking about the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that comes into us when we accept Christ as our Lord and Savior. Just as the Spirit was breathed into the disciples on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit comes into us when we first believe. It is the Holy Spirit that

walks with us and talks with us in the early morning of the garden. Does it really matter? I'm not sure. But I think that's why we often overlook the role of the Spirit. Yet, it so important to our lives as we live out our faith and serve the Lord.

Like the wind the Spirit is mysterious. His movements are often misunderstood and seen as coincidental. His purpose is to serve and witness the saving effects of Christ. In essence, the Spirit assists us in growing into our full potential as children of God.

It begins with justification. In John 1:12-13, John 3:1-8, and I Corinthians 12:3 we see that it is only by the Holy Spirit's witness that we can believe and declare that Jesus is Lord. Jesus says, we must be born again, born of water and the Spirit to see and know the kingdom of God. It is only through our baptism of the Holy Spirit that we can see and claim Jesus as our Lord. That's why it is so important to be praying for the person that you are witnessing to. You want the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of that person and to receive the blessing of the Spirit. It is not enough to have the right words or the correct formula. I used to think that I had to do it all as a preacher. But that's not the case. It is the Holy Spirit that opens our hearts and grants us the justification that comes through the blood and sacrifice of Jesus.

It is the Holy Spirit that makes our whole Christian life possible. Without the Holy Spirit, entrance into the Kingdom of God, and sharing the new life in Jesus Christ, would be beyond our reach. We can conclude that anyone who knows Christ as Lord and Savior has the Holy Spirit living within him.

Secondly, I want to talk about the Spirit in sanctification. Hear me out: I'm not talking about sainthood here. I am talking about the growth in our faith. It is how we become more like Christ every day. One way the Holy Spirit does this is through the cultivation of the fruit of the Spirit.

Whether our spiritual birth took place with all the drama of one who was lost being found, or nearly imperceptibly as a "child of the Covenant" in the loving embrace of a Christian family, it should be celebrated as a great and glorious thing. Being born again and being baptized is not the end all of our life in Christ but the beginning. We are like children who need to grow and mature in our faith. This happens with the help of the Holy Spirit that. Sanctification is the process of we growing in the image of Christ, and as it says in Romans 6:1-11, the old self being put to death and a new self being raised up.

Paul also speaks of this work of the Holy Spirit in terms of enabling us to bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit. He says in

Galatians 5, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. As we grow in faith, these characteristics become more prominent.

They mark the transformation of our old nature into one more aligned with Christ. It doesn't happen overnight. It is a lifelong process and a major work of the Holy Spirit. You know the song which says, "You are the potter. I am the clay." It is actually the Holy Spirit that is the potter, molding us, and shaping us into the image of Christ. This is the fulfillment of Jeremiah 31 where he says that a new covenant would be established in the hearts of the believers and they would know God.

Justification and sanctification are the inward works of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is also working to equip us to serve God. He gives us the power to continue Jesus' ministry, to share the good news, to baptize and to serve. Just as the Holy Spirit "came upon" the prophets, judges, and kings of the Old Testament giving God's them the power and ability, the Holy Spirit continues to empower His people. There is a difference however. This empowering is not just for a few; it is for all God's people. The apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 12 that God has given us gifts through the Holy Spirit. These gifts were for the building up of the body Christ to do the work of the church. If you find you have a talent or gift for

leadership, or teaching or helping or preaching or organization, it is because the Holy Spirit has given it to you for his service.

Yes, we can use it for our vocations but it is especially useful in serving the Lord, whether in the church or in the world. So don't neglect it. Don't bury it. Use it. Pray and then follow the Spirit's lead. He will show you what to do.

Finally, the Holy Spirit is the one who creates opportunities for fellowship within the body of Christ, and draws us together in unity. Paul says, "Don't grieve the Holy Spirit, in Ephesians 4:29-30. When you create dissension and disharmony in the body of Christ, whether it is a singular congregation or in a denomination or in the church universal, you are working against the Holy Spirit is trying to do. We read,

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

Jesus called us to be one. We are to work together to become an effective witness to the world. Now I have to careful here. There is wrong teaching and wrong interpretation. Paul addressed that in many of his letters. We have to call that out but there is a way to do it and to maintain unity in the body. But too often, the problems in a church arise over disagreements on the color of the carpet, the type of music, the version of the Bible, or the dress of

the people... rather than the essence of the gospel message. In Acts, after Pentecost, we find that the overall result of the dynamic life of the Holy Spirit is the creation of an extraordinary loving, growing community of believers. The Holy Spirit moves from the work in individuals to His work in community. He weaves the individual and the individual's experience into the fabric of the whole community as He works toward building the kingdom of God.