



Gifts of the HOLY SPIRIT

Day Eight: Fear of the Lord



Today's Scripture

Isaiah 11:2-3 Psalm 34

The ocean is one of my favorite things in the world. I even have a list of things that I love specifically about the ocean. Among those is standing on the beach at night, just looking out and listening to the waves. I feel joy, relaxation, and always a little bit of fear. In fact, I've found the more I stare at the ocean at night, the more terrifying it becomes.

But the fear is different than what we usually associate with being afraid – it makes me feel small and not in control, and I am in awe of the power of nature. Nothing reminds me of God more than standing in front of the ocean at night.

This time both the Church and Dictionary.com are in agreement – sometimes "fear" does not mean distress over an impending danger but rather "reverential awe." In other words, fear of the Lord is our response to His greatness, love, and mercy. Through the grace of this gift, we abandon ourselves to His fatherly love, forgiveness, and protection and grow in humility.

Now obviously there are things for which we should fear the Lord in a different sense – mortal sin, for example. But this doesn't mean we blindly follow God because he will punish us if we don't. We still have the foundation of love and respect for the Lord, and it is because of this that we have a healthy fear of injuring and severing that relationship through sin.

In Psalms 34 it says,

"The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them."

Our God is not the rash, punishing god that is so often depicted in various misunderstandings of the Old Testament. He is merciful and loving. But just as a parent knows what's best for a child and often needs to discipline in order them to grow, so it is with God as He pours out His love and protects those who adore Him in reverential awe.

Do you have "reverential awe" for the Lord? In what areas could you ask the Holy Spirit to increase your fear of the Lord so you do not become indifferent in your behavior or relationship with him? Does thinking of the power of God terrify you or humble you in reverence?

Come Holy Spirit, enlighten my heart, that I may see the things that are of God.

Come Holy Spirit, into my mind that I may know the things that are of God.

Come Holy Spirit, into my soul, that I may belong only to God.

Sanctify all that I think, say, and do, that all may be for the glory of God.

Pope Francis' teaching:

<http://w2.vatican.va/content/vatican/en.html>

- Emma



Gifts of the HOLY SPIRIT

Day Nine: The Charismatic Gifts



Today's Scripture

1 Corinthians 12-14

I can't write a whole series of posts on gifts of the Holy Spirit without mentioning what we call charismatic gifts of the Spirit. If you read 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14, you will hear St. Paul mention several of them – gift of tongues, gift of prophecy, gift of interpretation, etc. These are distinctly different from what are referred to as the sanctifying gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are the seven that we have been talking about until now (Isaiah 11:2-3).

The Church focuses on the sanctifying gifts during the sacrament of Confirmation – they are more important than the charismatic gifts and form us as individuals in our journey to be more like Christ. Charismatic gifts, though still important, are meant to build up other people in the Church, and different ones are given to different people (1 Corinthians 12:4-31).

Again, there is so much to be written on the Holy Spirit that I can't possibly do it justice in these posts, including information on the charismatic gifts specifically. However, instead of going into detailed explanations of each charismatic gift, I will talk about why these gifts are important and how they impact our lives.

Many times people have uncomfortable recollections of their experience with charismatic gifts. They have misconceived ideas about Protestant healing services who force handicapped people to try and walk, or prayer groups who speak in weird languages and talk about being "slain in the

Spirit." This was actually the case for me for a while. (Perhaps I watched too much TV.) I went to a prayer meeting when I was younger and didn't quite know how to process what was happening. It turns out that I simply had an enormous amount of unanswered questions that I was too afraid to ask, and all the people there wanted to pray over me.

It wasn't their fault – I was in middle school and too self-conscious to say anything. I could tell something pretty amazing was happening, but it wasn't until later that I learned the biblical foundation of these gifts (1 Corinthians 12–14) and how they actually operate in our lives. I was a skeptic who needed to be convinced, and through profound personal experiences, it worked.

A priest once described the Holy Spirit to me as the gas in your car. You can push your car (your faith) up the mountain, and you can certainly move forward doing this. However, adding gas (the Holy Spirit) will sure make things a lot easier! And so it is with all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, including the charismatic ones.

In my experience, I have found that a certain level of humility, surrender, and faith always allow the Holy Spirit to move in a greater way. By this I mean that the fruits of the Holy Spirit and prayer seem to be more evident and more powerful when we humbly surrender to God in faith and trust. And what these fruits look like can be very different depending on each person and situation.

Several years ago in college, I was going through the toughest year of my life. A combination of poor choices and the wrong crowd of friends got me to a place of deep emotional and spiritual pain. Some sisters of mine noticed I wasn't doing well, and they asked me if I would like them to pray over me. I kind of felt guilty saying no because I was clearly desperate, so I agreed. They gathered around me, and I felt weak and vulnerable. I was pretty sure some of them knew I was not on a good path.

Before beginning, one of them asked if I was comfortable with them praying in tongues. I had heard people pray in tongues before, so I said yes even though I didn't get it. They began praying, asking the Holy Spirit to fill me. I just sort of stood there with my teary eyes closed until they finished. A girl in front of me asked how I felt. I couldn't tell if they were looking for a particular answer, but I didn't have any. I just felt peaceful. Nothing crazy happened – I was just filled with a sense of peace and my distress left me, and that's exactly what I needed.

The girls hugged me with their understanding, kind eyes and said they would continue to pray for me. Their act of faith and cooperation with the Spirit, combined with my personal trust and surrender, led to God giving His abiding peace in my heart for which I was very grateful.

I began to learn that night that God wants to pour His love and mercy upon us in exactly the way we need, and sometimes He uses others and the charismatic gifts to do so. Since then I have had many more experiences with the Holy Spirit working in my life, some of them much more powerful, but all of them just as fruitful. I have seen the Spirit work miracles in others

right before me, as they were healed of sickness, injury, unforgiveness, and more. The book of Acts started to come alive as I read the stories and realized God still works miracles today!

Again, one of the keys to beginning or continuing your own journey with the Holy Spirit is surrender. The apostles surrendered despite their fear. I surrendered despite my shame and lack of understanding. Others have surrendered despite their physical disabilities.

So what's holding you back from a full life in surrender to the Spirit? Do you trust these kind of stories, or do you believe they were only meant for the apostles? Do you believe God has a specific plan for you that will bring wholeness and healing to your life?

Come Holy Spirit, enlighten my heart, that I may see the things that are of God.

Come Holy Spirit, into my mind that I may know the things that are of God.

Come Holy Spirit, into my soul, that I may belong only to God.

Sanctify all that I think, say, and do, that all may be for the glory of God.

- Emma



Gifts of the HOLY SPIRIT

Day Ten: Praying with the Holy Spirit



Today's Scripture

Romans 8

Now that we've had nine posts on the Holy Spirit (that's a good number, right?), take a moment to quiet yourself and watch this video.

This post is about praying with the Holy Spirit, for as St. Paul tells the Romans, "The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes with sighs too deep for words" (Romans 8:26).

Remember, our relationship with the Holy Spirit is really about surrender. How often do we actually apply this to our prayer lives? So many times we simply read a laundry list of petitions to God, without stopping to be thankful, to be quiet, to surrender. It is here in our surrender that the Holy Spirit takes our weakness and distractions and "intercedes with sighs too deep for words." I love the song and video above because I feel as though the musicians' surrender is visible in the way they praise him.

Even the lyrics are simple repetitions of a wholeheartedly surrender and invitation to God. Here are some practical applications for inviting the Holy Spirit into various forms of prayer that you can use immediately:

If you find prayer difficult, try asking the Holy Spirit to come and fill your heart when you start. Praise God and thank Him for the blessings He's given you, and then try listening. Practice having a disposition that is open to God's will and whatever He may want to move in you. You can gradually the length of time you are in silence to help.

You can also call upon the Holy Spirit before reading and praying with Scripture. Open to a passage and ask him to show you something in particular. What jumps out to you? How can you apply it to your life? Ask the Spirit to give you the graces to persevere in that application. We believe that scriptures are the Living Word of God, and part of that "living"-ness is the way that the Holy Spirit moves in us as we read them over and over again.

We can read the same words but gain something new from them each time! Ask the Spirit to stir your heart in the way he desires. If you are in a difficult situation with your family or a friend, ask the Holy Spirit to guide your words and actions. What is it that the Lord is asking of you in a particular moment? Ask for courage, light, and truth. Ask him to shed light on the situation, to show you the best course of action, to help you see Christ in others.

Sometimes people come to us to talk. They need advice, or they are going through a difficult time. I'm sure we have been the ones looking for comfort from others at times. But when it happens to us, we can often feel inadequate. This is a great time to pray, "Come, Holy Spirit!" and ask that he speaks to that person through you. Ask that your words may be a reflection of God, that they may console others in a way that brings them closer to Jesus.

If you feel prompted, perhaps even ask the person if you can pray with or for them, and do your best to follow the Holy Spirit in sharing God's hope, love, and goodness with them. And perhaps the most important way in which we pray with the Holy Spirit is with our praise of God! Many of us are uncomfortable with freely praising God out loud, whether by ourselves or with others.

But the more you practice and ask the Holy Spirit to remove all anxiety and fear, the more freedom you will find in prayer. We are ALL called to praise and thank God every day, whether through silent or vocal prayer, and regardless of whether there's music involved. So how can you find more time to praise him?

What obstacles do you need to overcome to praise him more freely? Have you asked the Holy Spirit for help doing this?

Come Holy Spirit, enlighten my heart, that I may see the things that are of God.
Come Holy Spirit, into my mind that I may know the things that are of God.
Come Holy Spirit, into my soul, that I may belong only to God.
Sanctify all that I think, say, and do, that all may be for the glory of God.

- Emma



Gifts of the HOLY SPIRIT

Day Eleven: Freedom in the Spirit



Today's Scripture

2 Corinthians 3:17 Ezekiel 36:26,
Galatians 5:1 Galatians 5:13

The totally rad video for this post is down at the bottom because I want you to read this first. There is one very, very important thing you need to know about the Holy Spirit. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is FREEDOM. (2 Corinthians 3:17)

Notice that there are no qualifications to this statement. If we believe Scripture is the Word of God, then we can claim the truth that in the Spirit there is FULL FREEDOM – from anxiety, fear, habitual sin, unforgiveness, complacency, etc. [insert whatever you want.

In my personal experience and in ministry to others, I have not found another verse needed more often than this one. I believe we have so many chains from the culture holding us down from living a true life of freedom! Chains of brokenness, addiction, hurt, suffering, loss, anger, attachment, comparison, the never-enough lies... The list goes on.

We need this message of freedom from Corinthians! So I have a very direct, personal question for you: What chains hold you down? What is cutting into you as you try to move forward? Which ones are you afraid to let go? What chains are so heavy that you don't know how much longer you can bear their weight?

Are you ready and willing to be set free? The two videos at the end of this post are by my favorite Christian band, The Rend Collective Experiment. It's difficult to deny the joy and freedom that they possess! Here's a quote from the lyrics to the second video: "It's only in surrender that I'm free! It's only in surrender that I'm truly free!"

In fact, so many of their songs speak of freedom (such as "Finally Free") that I'm convinced just listening to them will give people around the world hope that true freedom is possible. My own life is a testament to this freedom as well. As I mentioned previously, I've made my own fair share of poor choices and less-than-perfect friendships (more than I like to admit). Some of my mistakes I had to repeat before finally getting it through my head!

Thankfully, our dear Lord is ever patient and merciful... He's walked me through years of failure, learning, growing, forgiving, and healing. But it wasn't until I really surrendered to the Holy Spirit that my growth took off like a rocket – I had the proper guidance of a priest and was able begin letting God replace my stony heart with a new one (Ezekiel 36:26).

I started to understand and seek his gifts, and I built a foundation of prayer. From the scriptures we know that the Holy Spirit is light and truth! And with the explosion of his love into my life, the darkness and lies were slowly pushed out by this light and truth. I believe this is why there is freedom in the Holy Spirit – because the shrouds of darkness and the chains of sin and lies are cast away by the very nature of who the Holy Spirit is! If we have the Holy Spirit in us, he will make us free.

Don't settle for living a life chained to mediocrity. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with Light and Truth, to manifest his gifts in your heart, and to truly SET YOU FREE. Is this not why Jesus came? To set us free? Let's stop trying to do it all on our own. Let Christ's Advocate, the Holy Spirit, do in your heart what he was sent here to do. May God bless you!

Come Holy Spirit, enlighten my heart, that I may see the things that are of God.
Come Holy Spirit, into my mind that I may know the things that are of God.
Come Holy Spirit, into my soul, that I may belong only to God.
Sanctify all that I think, say, and do, that all may be for the glory of God.

Now for the vid:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1lATot8ghzs>

MAH5bJ4TGNcB1K

And for my fellow Mumford fans, here's another sweet song:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lucg_fLH68o&list=PLGXQK3aC61FQc2TZv9-MAH5bJ4TGNcB1K&index=5

- Emma