

CFC Connect Hosts

2024/2025

Part 1 – Origin of the Holy Spirit

You can either watch the first video before you meet together, or you can start by watching the video together.

Introduction:

We want to take some time to understand God as Holy Spirit. Depending on your upbringing, denomination, experiences and theology the Holy Spirit has been a contested and debated part of God. The debate has never been around the essential reality that God is three in one, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; rather it is the outworking and power of the Holy Spirit for ordinary Jesus followers today.

We want you to be able to share honestly your journey, your experiences and how you understand the Holy Spirit works today and discover how we as a group can grow together in what the Scriptures teach and how we can teach each other.

Share:

1. Did you grow up in a community where the Holy Spirit was mentioned? Help us understand what that was like.
2. Would you describe yourself as someone who is confident in how to relate to the Holy Spirit?
3. Do you have a clear Biblical understanding of the Holy Spirit? Either way, can you help us understand what you believe? (This is a good opportunity for honest reflection from each person as opposed to a “one size fits all” model).
4. What, if any, questions do you have about the Holy Spirit?

Read:

Lets start by taking some time to read from the Old Testament Scriptures.

Read Genesis 1:1-3 and John 1:1-5

It is clear that God is three in one. Father, Son and Holy Spirit and we see this from the very beginning. What we learn from John’s gospel is that Jesus is the Word; so the picture we see from Genesis is one where the Father speaks creation through Jesus as the Word, and the Spirit brings creation to life.

The Hebrew word for the hovering Spirit in Genesis is “Ruah” and can be translated as breath, wind and spirit. It continues to come up throughout the Old Testament.

Firstly, the Spirit brings life itself.

Read Genesis 2:7; Job 27:3; Job 33:4

Notice what we see here. We see God breathe into Adam the “Ruah” of life – the breath or spirit of life. It is Job who later reminds us that the “Ruah” of God is within him. And Elihu tells how the “Ruah” of God has made him. So the Spirit brings life.

Interestingly, the Spirit doesn’t just bring life, the Spirit also leads and guides.

Read Ezekiel 37:1

Ezekiel is led into the valley by the “Ruah” of Yahweh. Notice already, the Holy Spirit is not a New Testament concept. The Holy Spirit has been a part of the redemptive story of God and has been integral in bringing about redemption through the pages of Scripture.

What we must also notice is how the Spirit brought power to humans by resting on them.

Read Genesis 41:38; Numbers 24:2; Judges 3:10; 2 Chronicles 15:1

Pharaoh puts Joseph’s ability to interpret his dreams down to the power of “Ruah” living in him. Baalam begins to prophecy because “Ruah” has brought him the power to do so. Othniel becomes leader of Israel through the power of “Ruah”. Azariah exhorts the people through the power of “Ruah”. Wisdom, prophecy, leadership, exhortation. Does all this sound familiar?

Share:

The questions we have to ask ourselves is this:

1. What conclusions can you draw about the Holy Spirit just from reading through the Old Testament?
2. If we were to take the authority of the pages of scripture, before allowing our experiences to change our belief, what would our expectations be if someone, today, was to encounter and be filled by this same “Ruah”?

Some more examples for extra reading:

Numbers 11:24-30 – Moses gives the “Ruah” to elders who prophecy (v25)

Numbers 27:15-23 – Joshua and the “Ruah” of leadership (v18)

1 Samuel 10:1-8 – The “Ruah” will come upon you (v6)

Guided Prayer

As we grow in Spirit together over these next few weeks or months, what is it that you want to ask God to reveal to you or help you with?

Spiritual Practice to do together until next time

- Solitude and Silence

Take time (this will vary depending on each person) over this next week or two, each day, to still your heart and quieten the noise around you, and simply pray "Holy Spirit, can you reveal to me today what you want to reveal to me."

This might be scripture, pictures, a word, a feeling. It would be great to come back together and share how it went.

Part 2 – Spirit and Jesus

You can either watch the second video before you meet together, or you can start by watching the video together.

Introduction:

We want to take some time to understand God as Holy Spirit. Depending on your upbringing, denomination, experiences and theology the Holy Spirit has been a contested and debated part of God. The debate has never been around the essential reality that God is three in one, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; rather it is the outworking and power of the Holy Spirit for ordinary Jesus followers today.

For part 2, we want to look at how the “Ruah” of God, now reveals himself yet again in the pages of Scripture, this time through the life of Jesus. Jesus is God, yet Jesus was clearly led and filled by the Holy Spirit. Why? What can we learn and how can this change our reality and discipleship as Jesus followers who are also filled and led by the Holy Spirit?

Share:

1. When you have looked at the life of Jesus, how would you describe what He is like?
2. Once you have described what He is like, how would you describe how He lived his life? How did he go about his day to day business?
3. When you look at your life, and the life of Jesus, what ways of living do you feel most drawn towards and what ways of living do you feel are most different to yours?

Note: We are not trying to relive the cultural moment Jesus lived in (He was a first century Jewish Rabbi – most of us are not Rabbis). But the way he lived his life is just as important as what he taught. This is what we are trying to become.

4. Before we read together, from your perspective, why was Jesus filled with the Holy Spirit even though He was God?

Read:

Remember that the Hebrew word for Spirit was “Ruah”. Now as we enter the New Testament, which was written in Greek, the word for Spirit is now “Pneuma” which means spirit or wind. This is where we get our English word, pneumatology from, which is the study of spiritual beings or phenomena.

Read Luke 3:21-23

Here we have Jesus (the son) with the Spirit descending on Him and the voice of the Father. Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It brings us back to the Genesis creation account that we read last time we were together. If we draw from our Old Testament reading last time we were together, our expectation here would be that the Spirit resting on Jesus will change something; the Spirit will bring power and life.

Notice then what Luke does with his language:

Read Luke 4:1 and 4:14-19

Notice the language. Jesus was "full of" the Holy Spirit and "led by" the Holy Spirit. Jesus returned to Galilee in "the power of" the Holy Spirit. Does this remind us of the "Ruah" of the Old Testament? Notice, then, when Jesus reads the words from the scroll of Isaiah as the fulfilment of this scripture that the Spirit of the Lord is on him. Filled, led and empowered. Jesus models a life for us today. He models a life in the Spirit where he is filled, led and empowered.

Some may ask the question, why, if Jesus is God, does he need to be filled, led and empowered?

This is a debated topic. One theory of scholars would say that Jesus, being fully God, gives up his divine right or privilege and takes on the nature of a servant - therefore being utterly dependent on the Holy Spirit. They would say everything Jesus does from this point in his life is through the filling, leading and empowering of the Holy Spirit. He is still God, but does not use His "Godness" to do anything. He becomes a model for us today on what a life in spirit looks like.

Read Philippians 2:6-7

Notice the language here. Jesus being fully God, does not use his divine right or privilege to his advantage.

Whatever way we approach the topic, we all can agree that Jesus lived a life where he consistently practised the presence of the Father. Jesus uses spiritual practices such as solitude and silence, prayer, community and celebration as a model for us today. But he also practised the power of the Holy Spirit in his life where he makes prophecies, he gives words of knowledge and wisdom, he heals, he pastors, he leads and he shows mercy. This is also true for us today - just as Jesus was filled, led and empowered - we too must be filled, led and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Share:

- After everything you have read tonight and heard, how would you articulate a theology around Jesus and Spirit? Has your answer to the fourth question from earlier changed or been affirmed? (If people disagree that is ok - this is a debated topic - we can disagree within unity - the goal is to help each other wrestle with what we actually believe).
- Jesus is our model for a life lived in the spirit - how do you see yourself becoming more like Jesus? What is going to help you become more like Him?
- What does it mean to you to live a life filled, led and empowered by the holy spirit?

Some more examples for extra reading:

John 5:19 - Jesus says the Son only ever does what He sees the Father doing. This may suggest Jesus never acted of his own accord - once again He models a life dependent on the permission and leading of the Father.

Acts 2:22 - Peter says God did miracles, wonders and signs through Jesus - Jesus made himself a vessel

John 14:12 - Those who follow Jesus will do the same works he has been doing

Guided Prayer

Lord, show me areas of my life that I am fearful to surrender to the filling, leading and empowering of your spirit - help me surrender and walk in your Spirit as Jesus did so I too may do the works He did.

Spiritual Practice to do together until next time

- Scripture Memorisation

Our minds are bombarded with media, communications, narratives and thoughts. When Paul talks in his letter to the Roman's of the renewing of our minds, this is the work of the Holy Spirit drawing us back to the image of God we were created in.

We aid the process by positioning ourselves in spiritual practices that train our bodies to know what is True and what is not. Scripture memorisation is one of the best practices for this because we believe God's word is God-breathed and therefore true.

Memorise the words of Jesus below before you gather again and take note of when the Holy Spirit brings this passage to your mind during your day to day.

Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

John 14:12–14.

Part 3 – Spirit and Us (Part 1)

You can either watch the third video before you meet together, or you can start by watching the video together.

Introduction:

We want to take some time to understand God as Holy Spirit. Depending on your upbringing, denomination, experiences and theology the Holy Spirit has been a contested and debated part of God. The debate has never been around the essential reality that God is three in one, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; rather it is the outworking and power of the Holy Spirit for ordinary Jesus followers today.

Part 3 of our series now brings the conversation closer to home where we look and see what it means for us to understand a life in the spirit and live in obedience and surrender to the spirit in our lives. Spiritual gifts are the language Paul and Peter use when describing what the “Ruah” of the Old Testament and now the “Pneuma” of the New Testament brings.

Share:

1. What is your understanding and or questions of the spiritual gifts?
2. What are the spiritual gifts?

Read:

What we read last time we were together was that the Holy Spirit rested on Jesus, led him, filled him and empowered him. Jesus being the one who asks us to follow Him, must now receive, be led, filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit as His followers.

Read John 20:19–23

The language of Jesus breathing on the disciples draws us back to the Genesis creation account where God breathes the breath or spirit (“Ruah”) of life into Adam. Here we have Jesus breathing the Holy Spirit into his disciples. The message is clear; Jesus is giving us a recreation moment to step back toward Eden and take up the purpose of living as God’s representatives here and now. The spirit is essential for this.

Read Ephesians 1:3

Ephesians 1:3–14 is the longest sentence in the New Testament. Paul used no punctuation to break up what he was saying – he just cannot help himself. It is almost like Paul, being under house arrest in Rome, forgets himself and breaks out into praise.

But in verse 3 that we just read Paul makes a crucially important doctrinal statement. He uses a Greek word three times to make his point - "eulogetos", which means blessed. The first time he uses it, he describes The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as "eulogetos" - meaning praiseworthy or the blessed one. Paul is not instructing praise, he is saying that we can praise many different things or people, but God the Father is the only blessed one worthy of our praise. But Paul then uses the same word slightly differently.

He says that we are "eulogeo" through Jesus - which means blessed with benefits. So God is the blessed one, who gives his blessing away so we become the blessed ones with benefits. But what are these benefits? Paul uses the word one more time and says that we have been given every spiritual "eulogia" which means blessing with generous gifts. So through Jesus, we are blessed with benefits and these benefits are spiritual gifts in the heavenly places. Not just your pastor or your friend who is really compassionate - everyone who is in Christ is now gifted beneficiaries in the form of spiritual gifts. So what are the spiritual gifts?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 & 28; Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 4:11

- Word of wisdom
- Word of knowledge
- Faith
- Healing
- Miracles
- Prophecy and prophets
- Discernment / Distinguishing between spirits
- Tongues
- Interpretation of tongues
- Apostolic
- Teaching
- Helps
- Administration
- Leadership
- Exhortation / Encouragement
- Giving
- Mercy
- Evangelism
- Pastor / Shepherd

Share:

Discerning spiritual gifts are essential to be done in a community where others you trust notice them in you. These are not personality driven. Joy and power are two ways to discover gifting.

1. Are there specific situations in life where you feel the power of God working through you?
2. Are there specific situations in life where you do something for someone else and it fills you with joy?
3. What do you think are some of the gifts in the people you are currently with? Take some time to share and speak that over each other if the group knows each other well and there is trust.
4. What is the purpose of spiritual gifts?

Guided Prayer

Lord, what gifts have you given me to do the work you have called me to? And what gifts have you not given me so I know who to work alongside in the work you have called me to?

Spiritual Practice to do together until next time

- Fasting**

We all want many things and we all want to be a certain someone. But as we seek what God is doing in and through us, a posture of surrender is essential in discerning his voice. Fasting is a way of abstaining from something that costs us to make room for Him and align our hearts with His. As you seek to understand the gifts God has given you, choose a day or time to fast until you next come together and listen to what God has to say about spiritual gifts in your life.

** Wisdom is essential when it comes to fasting. If someone has a difficult relationship with food please advise and help people understand there are other ways to fast such as screen time on your phone and spending money.

Part 4 – Spirit and Us (Part 2)

You can either watch the forth video before you meet together, or you can start by watching the video together.

Introduction:

We want to take some time to understand God as Holy Spirit. Depending on your upbringing, denomination, experiences and theology the Holy Spirit has been a contested and debated part of God. The debate has never been around the essential reality that God is three in one, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; rather it is the outworking and power of the Holy Spirit for ordinary Jesus followers today.

I don't think there is such a thing as a perfect church. Inevitably, community and people coming together can bring challenges – if you are waiting for a perfect community, you will wait for a lifetime. Spiritual gifts bring an added layer of complexity into community. Priorities will range and may even clash. How we navigate our spiritual gifts and the tensions that may be created is essential to ensuring a united church.

At the same time, we must be realists. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, pastor, theologian and peace activist once said “The person who loves their dream of community will destroy community, but the person who loves those around them will create community.” As we navigate the topic of community, we must ensure we do not allow our dream to taint our reality; we must become people who are resilient in our love for others.

Share:

1. Can you tell us of a time where you were a part of a community that was healthy? What impact did this have on you?
2. How would you describe a healthy community?
3. How do you help create community in your work or church?

Read:

Once again, the apostle Paul takes to advising and writing to Jesus followers in the early post-Jesus decades and speaks profoundly into the management of spiritual gifts in community.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:31 – 13:8

Paul's strong language makes a stark point. Without love, we are “nothing”. But notice the tension here; we can have powerful gifts, yet lack the very necessity of Christ, which is love. Our priorities have to be aligned with those of Jesus. You can prophesy, have faith, speak in tongues and do it all without love.

The beauty of scripture is that it holds nothing back. The greatest teachers and warriors of the faith are often exposed in their fragility and weakness. Paul is not spared from this – not only do we know his origin story as a zealous Pharisee wanting the destruction of every “follower of the way”, but even after his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus we find a story of Paul faced with a “sharp disagreement”.

Read Acts 15:36–41

Paul wants to go on mission once again, encouraging the churches he and Barnabas had established on their first missionary journey. Barnabas wants to bring John, also called Mark, but Paul, because of John Mark’s previous departures, doesn’t see that as a good idea. Hence the “sharp disagreement”.

There are many ways we can approach a passage like this, but what if we thought about this through the lens of spiritual gifts. What spiritual gifts may be clashing here? Paul, potentially having an apostolic gift, sees the need for efficiency and thoroughness. John Mark is not a good fit for this task. Barnabas, maybe having a pastoral gift or gift of mercy cannot make sense of leaving someone behind. Everyone always deserves a second chance.

Are these not situations we face every day? Different perspectives. Different passions and different wills. If you were to ask the question, who is right, you may sway more toward Paul or Barnabas but the reality is there is validity in them both. Paul went on with Silas to establish more churches on his second missionary journey. Paul’s legacy has impacted the lives of billions of Christians since his writings were included in the canon of scripture. Barnabas went back to Cyprus with John Mark and Barnabas is still the patron saint of Cyprus today – establishing the Christian church on the island. Christian tradition also says that John Mark then went on to write the Gospel of Mark which has carried the essential story of Jesus.

Who was right? Both.

Think this through in our modern context in a church filled with different spiritual gifts. Those with mercy will sit and weep with those weeping, while those with the gift of exhortation will inspire people into action, while those with the gift of evangelism will be reaching the lost. But if we were to try and get them all to move in the same way we may see the sharp disagreement that Paul and Barnabas split over.

Share:

The questions we must master are these:

1. How can we all operate in our spiritual gifts whilst maintaining unity?
2. What is important when it comes to agreeing to disagree and blessing one another as we all work to establish God's Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven?
3. How could Paul and Barnabas have stayed unified?

Guided Prayer:

Lord, have I longed for the failure of those who have gone different directions than me? Are you blessing them and blessing me at the same time? If this is so, I am sorry - help me to love those different to me and want what is best for your Kingdom, not mine.

Spiritual Practice to do together until next time:

- Confession

Dallas Willard describes the practice of confession as "a discipline that functions within fellowship. In it we let trusted others know our deepest weaknesses and failures. This will nourish our faith in God's provision for our needs through his people, our sense of being loved, and our humility before our brothers and sisters. Thus we let some friends in Christ know who we really are, not holding back anything important, but, ideally, allowing complete transparency. We lay down the burden of hiding and pretending, which normally takes up such a dreadful amount of human energy. We engage and are engaged by others in the most profound depths of the soul."

Who is someone you can practise confession with? Someone you trust and is experienced in following Jesus, mature in their faith and will be able to steward the vulnerability of this practice with wisdom. Meet with them and either plan to make this a part of your life or begin with confessional prayer together. When you meet together as a group share how this has been.

Part 5 – Spirit and Character

You can either watch the fifth video before you meet together, or you can start by watching the video together.

Introduction:

We want to take some time to understand God as Holy Spirit. Depending on your upbringing, denomination, experiences and theology the Holy Spirit has been a contested and debated part of God. The debate has never been around the essential reality that God is three in one, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; rather it is the outworking and power of the Holy Spirit for ordinary Jesus followers today.

Part 5 of our series now shines the light on our inner life, or as you may say it, character, which comes from the Greek word “kharaktēr” meaning an engraving or stamping tool. These tools would give a distinctive mark to whatever they were impressed on and is a reminder for us today that spiritual gifts give the potential to create powerful influence, but it is our character that leaves the mark of impression.

Share:

1. When you think of the activity of the Holy Spirit, what do you think of?
2. How do you understand the Holy Spirit’s role in forming your character or inner life?
3. Why do you think character is important as Jesus followers?

Read:

Jesus gives us the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but with the Holy Spirit also comes fruit.

Read Galatians 5:13–26

Some scholars believe the fruit of the spirit is actually love and Paul then gives eight characteristics of what love is and how it is formed in our lives. Either way the Holy Spirit in our lives is producing fruit that is in direct contrast to what our flesh produces. Do you notice the difference between the two and how Paul encourages us to keep in step with the Spirit?

Also, notice what the Spirit produces is described as fruit. When you go and visit an orchard, it is silent. There is not the noise of straining or over working. Deep roots are gathering all the nourishment they need and by their abiding in the right soil, they grow fruit. This is a key picture for us when we think about producing spiritual fruit.

Read John 15:4-12

Notice the language Jesus uses. From verse 4-10, the Greek word "meno" is used eleven times. This word means remain or abide. Even the fruitful branch does not bear fruit of itself, but only insofar as it assimilates and is nourished by the sap of the vine. So the disciple of Jesus cannot bear fruit, unless they abide in the Vine. There will be many things that pull for our devotion, our attention and our discipline, but Jesus makes it clear - remain or abide in His love.

Here is the difference between the natural and the spiritual order. The vine shoot has not the power of choosing whether it will "abide" in the vine, or cut itself loose, but in the spiritual sphere this "abiding" is not maintained without the constant and conscious endeavour of our own will.

Some have heard the words of Jesus and tried to become loving by "doing" nothing. This has been the mistaken understanding of abiding.

Peter invites us into a way of living that encourages us to put every effort into becoming the very character of Christ.

Read 2 Peter 1:3-11

Peter tells us to add to our faith. The work of the cross is a rescue mission, but the outworking of the cross is now a restoration mission. It is not simply believing in Jesus - it is an active following and pursuing the character of Christ as we add these characteristics to ourselves every day. We partner with the Holy Spirit in our lives as we keep in step with the Spirit and ensure that we possess these qualities in increasing measure and as we do this they will keep us from being ineffective and unproductive. We cannot change ourselves, but we can put ourselves in the best positions to be changed.

We remain in the love of Jesus while actively seeking to become more and more loving. This is how the fruit of the spirit is produced in our lives. It was Dallas Willard that famously said, "grace is the opposite of earning, not effort". So we make every effort to become the very character of Jesus every single day and allow the holy spirit to transform our inner lives. The effort described here is often articulated as the spiritual practices; positioning ourselves in every day rhythms where we allow our hearts and minds to be formed around the things of God.

The gifts of the spirit must be stewarded by people of good character. This is the responsibility of every Jesus follower. It is not to be perfect - rather it is to consistently choose to keep in step with the spirit.

Share:

1. What is the potential danger of operating within our spiritual gifts but not paying attention to the fruit of the spirit in our lives?

2. What is the difference between earning and effort in our spiritual lives?
3. What are practices or efforts that you do everyday that position you in places and spaces that partner with the holy spirit's movement in your character?
4. Are there practises you want to start as a result of this discussion?

Guided Prayer

Lord, I want to become more and more like your character. Help me in this moment to abide in your love, allowing all other narratives and critics to move into the background and your presence and voice to now become the only one I know.

Spiritual Practice to do together until next time

- Prayer

"The most important discovery you will ever make is the love the Father has for you," writes Pete Greig, founder of the 24-7 Prayer Movement. "Your power in prayer will flow from the certainty that the One who made you likes you, he is not scowling at you, he is on your side ... Unless our mission and our acts of mercy, our intercession, petition, confession, and spiritual warfare begin and end in the knowledge of the Father's love, we will act and pray out of desperation, determination, and duty instead of revelation, expectation, and joy."

Tyler Staton says "Pray as you can, and somewhere along the way, you will make the most important discovery of your life—the love the Father has for you. That discovery is God's end of the deal. Your part is just to show up honestly. Show up, and keep showing up. That's the one non-negotiable when it comes to prayer. And that invitation is for everybody."

Mark three times every day until you will meet again for as little or as long as you can and spend it in prayer. When you come back together, share how this practice was for you and how you can encourage one another to keep praying.

Part 6 – Spirit and Warfare

You can either watch the sixth video before you meet together, or you can start by watching the video together.

Introduction:

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Part 6 of our series embraces one last concept the early followers of Jesus were comfortable with, yet has become distorted for us in our modern day; spiritual warfare. In the 1995 movie, "The Usual Suspects" a guileful character named Keyser Söze makes a profound statement when he says "...the greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist." CS Lewis, writer and theologian, famously wrote in his book, Screwtape Letters, "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight." To deny, or to become obsessed with. As Jesus followers, we must have a healthy understanding and awareness when it comes to the Holy Spirit and spiritual warfare.

Share:

1. What do you think of when you think of spiritual warfare?
2. Have you had periods of your life of unhealthy obsession or denial when it comes to the devil?
3. What do you understand spiritual warfare to be?

Read:

Thomas Aquinas, scholastic theologian and a major influence of the church created the Summa Theologica in 1265. It is a compendium of the main theological teachings of the Catholic Church. Scholars still point to this as one of the most important theological works of all time. It is here we discover the language of spiritual warfare and mainly "the three enemies of the soul". These three enemies are:

1. The World
2. The Flesh
3. The Devil

This language showed up again at the Council of Trent in 1543 which was a key moment in the Protestant Reformation and this language entered the English-speaking world through The Book of Common Prayer in 1549.

The language of “the world, the flesh and the devil” isn’t exactly used by Jesus or the writers of the New Testament, but the language and categories are.

Read Ephesians 6:10–20

Paul regularly likens following Jesus to a war (See also 2 Tim. 2:4). Notice how he encourages the Ephesians to put on armour so they can stand against the devil’s schemes. Timothy was the pastor of the church in Ephesus and Paul’s letters to him are his final words before being martyred. In here we see the same theme of warfare language.

Read 1 Timothy 1:18; 6:12 and 2 Corinthians 10:3–4

One of Paul’s most quoted verses is to “fight the battle well”. We are in a battle. There is no real way around this reality as a Jesus follower. This was counterintuitive language for followers of Jesus whose Rabbi was fiercely nonviolent and chose to die for his enemies in love, not kill them in battle. In fact most early church fathers and mothers, who until the fourth century were almost all pacifists, regularly used the imagery of warfare to describe the inner dynamics of the soul. Paul also suggests that although we do not wage war as the world does; we still wage war. But the weapons we fight with are not as the world fights – these weapons demolish strongholds.

So what must we know about the world, the flesh and the devil?

The world.

Read John 17:15–18 and 1 John 2:15–17

Jesus’ prayer for you is this. That you are not taken out of the world. Rather you are protected while in the world. It is easy to pit our spirituality as “us and them” but this has only led to division. This is still the world God created, yes fallen, but there is still beauty. As we live in it, there are fallen patterns and cultures and leaders and plans that oppose the Kingdom of God. We are not to be taken from this – we are to create beauty wherever we are in this world.

John describes the world through lust, or another way of saying this is desire. When we desire things more than God, John says this is the way of the world. So how are our desires ranked? We will never be rid of desire, that is God given, but we must maintain discipline in ordering our desires around Jesus.

The Flesh.

Read Galatians 2:20; 5:13, 16-17

Paul makes it clear. In Jesus we are free. But what he also makes clear is we still live in these “earthly bodies” that have been painfully corrupted and shaped by patterns of this world that were never meant for us. We were designed for a good world, yet we live in broken temples that are made whole in Christ through faith. The flesh will crave what is opposite to the spirit and the spirit what is opposite to the flesh. So keep in step with the spirit.

The Devil.

Read John 8:44, 2 Corinthians 2:10 and 1 Peter 5:8-9

Jesus makes it clear, the devil’s native tongue is lies. How profound is that? An awareness that the way the devil will try and attack Jesus followers will be through lies is essential for us. Lies about who we are and about who others are. Paul says the devil has schemes. And one of these schemes is unforgiveness. This is why he chooses forgiveness. He refuses to give the devil a foothold.

Peter tells us to be alert and sober in our thinking so we can resist the devil he describes like a prowling lion looking for someone to devour. So let’s not be naive – we know the devil is wanting to attack. So be alert – but not obsessed. Resist – but do not fear.

Share:

- How would you advise someone who is stuck in their spiritual journey and struggling to make an effort to grow toward Jesus after discussing spiritual warfare together?
- How would you pray for the person in light of spiritual warfare?
- Is there neutral ground? If we are not moving toward Jesus in our everyday life, are we moving away from Him?
- How would you define spiritual warfare? Is it similar or different to what you thought earlier?

Guided Prayer

Lord, I know there is an enemy to my soul and my intimacy with you. Help me to be strong in your mighty power. Teach me every day to put on the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, I fit my feet with the gospel of peace, I take up my shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God so that I may stand firm.

Spiritual Practice to do together until next time

- Rule of Life

John Mark Comer, pastor and author writes, "A Rule of Life is a schedule and set of practices and relational rhythms that create space for us to be with Jesus, become like Him, and do as He did, as we live in alignment with our deepest desires. It is a way of intentionally organising our lives around what matters most: God."

Pastor Rich Villodas says "...the rule of life doesn't mean a list of rules. It is more of a set of practices, relationships, and commitments that is inspired by the Spirit for the sake of our wholeness in Christ."

Think through the past number of weeks since you started this series. What practices have helped you keep in step with the spirit? What practices can you make a part of your every day, week, month and year that will keep you moving toward Jesus? Create this as a group and share.

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