



PENTECOST

— RENEW SEASONAL GUIDE —

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THE SPIRIT WHO TRANSFORMS US

———— Galatians 5:22-23 ————

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, against such things, there is no law.

REFLECTIONS

In John's gospel Jesus tells us, if we keep his commands, he will ask the Father to send us another advocate who will help you and be with you forever, the Spirit of truth (14:16-17)

The word for the Holy Spirit in Hebrew is *Rûah* meaning 'breath, spirit' and in Greek it is *Paraclete*, 'the advocate, or helper'.

When we choose the way of Jesus, we welcome the Holy Spirit to begin his transforming work in our lives. We invite and allow the Holy Spirit's prompting, guiding, and refining to take place within ourselves, our relationships, our work, in every part of our being. What a gift indeed to know we are not doing this journey on our own.

The fruit of the Spirit each represent a part of Jesus's character. The growth of this fruit is evidence of the work of

the Spirit transforming us into the likeness of Christ.

When I have witnessed the fruit of the Spirit in my life, it has often been in the hardest spaces. Prior to having our daughter there was a long period of grief, following two miscarriages, failed medical treatment, and the potential life-changing impact of permanent loss of my voice. It was a rugged and hard time, full of disappointment. In the midst of this, I continued to choose to trust God.

This was also the same period of my life where, although grief and loss were prominent, the peace, joy, love, and gentleness of God were so profoundly present, more than I have experienced at any other time in my life.

God desires us to be Spirit filled and fruitful. When we surrender our desires to God and choose

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to trust him, we can live out the fruit of His Spirit.

Will we unleash violence of all kinds on others and avoid facing our fragility?

Or will we surrender our comfort and desires to the Father, to see Jesus' revolution of justice and peace break through in our world?

QUESTIONS

- 01 Where have you previously experienced the presence of the fruit of your Spirit in your life?
- 02 Where do you currently see the fruit of the Spirit evident in your life?
- 03 Spend a few minutes in silence/listening to God, where do you think God is calling you to experience growth?



THE SPIRIT WHO SPEAKS TO AND THROUGH US

Matthew 9:9

As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector's booth; and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him.

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When we think about the call to Matthew to follow Jesus, we often focus on why Jesus called someone like Matthew. What we don't talk about as often, is what prompted Matthew to say yes. As a tax collector, Mathew lived in a world of hierarchy, numbers, debts and payments that all made logical sense within the world he lived.

By following Jesus, Matthew made the decision to leave it all behind. To follow someone who performed miracles in a way that existed beyond the logic he knew, where the rules of transaction didn't apply.

In this moment, we know Matthew must have been guided by something bigger than himself to commit to a new life so different to what he knew. The invitation Jesus extended to Matthew wasn't just words, these were words empowered by

the Spirit of God. Words with the power to move someone, to compel them, to set their heart of fire and cause them to say 'yes, I will follow you.'

Over time, the way I have felt the Holy Spirit give wisdom and guidance to me has changed. When I first became Christian, people would often pray for me at Church, and get all sorts of pictures and words for me. I loved the adrenaline of receiving a new picture, working out its meaning, and waiting for the next one.

At the end of last year, I was about to begin a new role. At a camp, I asked a group to pray for me. To my disappointment, no one had a huge vision or dramatic picture. Instead, they offered words of encouragement and peace. Yet when I sat down with myself, I felt the Holy Spirit echo the encouragement from the prayer room, and remind me that

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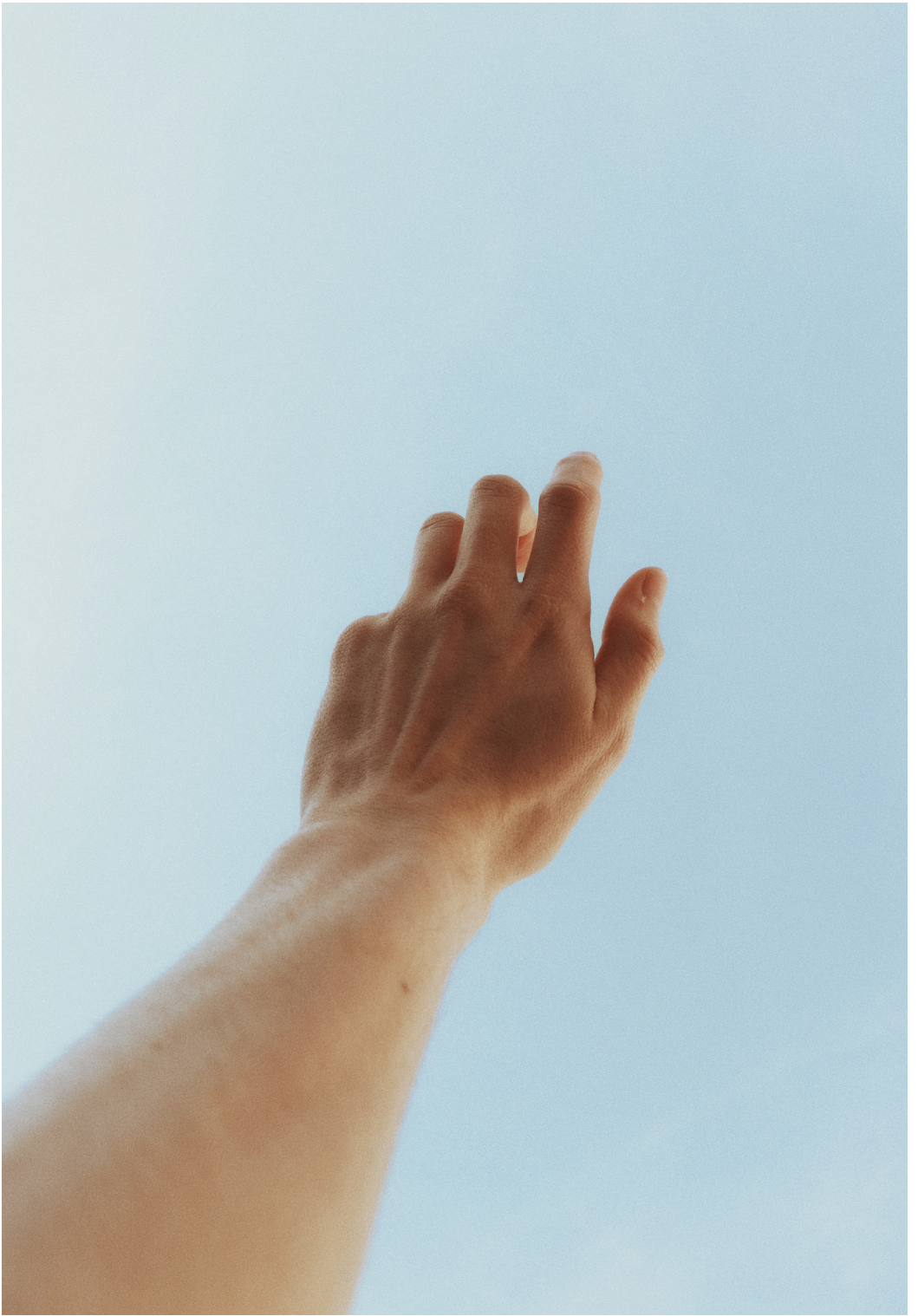
the wisdom of the Spirit didn't have to come from a dramatic picture, but could come from a quiet, peaceful whisper.

I have experienced the wisdom of God dramatically and powerfully, but also through the least spectacular and most normal things. Both are the work of His Spirit. Words are powerful, and it is the way of the Holy Spirit to grab hold of simple words and make powerful changes in our hearts and lives.

These words come sometimes directly to us, but also through “words of knowledge” as Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 12:8. These are moments where the Holy Spirit gives us wisdom for another person and we are able to offer them an invitation to new and abundant life, just as Jesus did for Matthew.

QUESTIONS

- 01 Have you previously received a word which has brought you life, hope or guidance? What did that look like?
- 02 Have you given a word of knowledge to another person? How did this feel? How did it go?
- 03 Spend a few minutes in silence/listening to God, who may God be speaking through you to?



THE SPIRIT OF POWER

Acts 2:1-4

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

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In 2005, Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton coined a phrase for the kind of faith that they were seeing in young people in the United States: Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. Their assertion was that many now believe in a God who primarily exists to meet their therapeutic needs, such as enhancing their self-esteem and personal sense of security.

If we're not careful, this can become the approach that some of us take in understanding the Holy Spirit too. We focus on the Spirit as 'comforter and counsellor' and forget the incredible power revealed in the Acts 2 account of Pentecost. This is a Spirit who overcomes language barriers, appears in fire and flames, and brings thousands to Christ.

In my life, I have seen those who couldn't have children conceive, those with incurable conditions

cured, and people set free from years of brokenness in a moment. This is the power of the Holy Spirit, and it is the same Spirit that Christ left with his disciples to carry out his mission of liberation, healing, and freedom. When we lay hands on one another, it is the same Spirit we ask to come and equip us for this same mission. Just as the Apostles did to the new followers of Jesus.

For some of us, this may evoke scepticism or cynicism. For others, you may have seen the movement of the Holy Spirit mixed in with some questionable church cultures or theologies. And yet, Christ still calls us to foolishness – to believe that when we invite the Holy Spirit to come, we may see power beyond our own power and strength beyond our own strength. Our fear of the misrepresentation of the Holy Spirit's power should not rob us of the opportunity to truly encounter her.

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Our Renew Communities are wholeheartedly committed to the liberation and freedom of many who struggle in the grip of mental health crises, addiction, poverty, and isolation. For those who mourn, the Spirit still comes as comforter. However, we rob our communities of the full liberation they deserve when we “have a form of godliness, but deny its power.” (2 Timothy 3:5)

For us to sustain our commitment to Jesus and his transformation of the world around us, we must wait on God for the gifts

1 Corinthians 12 promises us: incredible wisdom, supernatural knowledge of situations and people, insane faith, miraculous healing and deliverance, prophetic imagination, and the speaking and interpretation of tongues. Anything less is the work of God done in our own strength. It is this attempt to do the Spirit’s work without the power of the Spirit which leads us back into exhaustion, and the same diminished therapeutic vision of God.

QUESTIONS

- 01 Have you previously seen or experienced the power of the Holy Spirit? What did that look like?
- 02 Is the idea of relying on the Holy Spirit’s power for transformation and liberation challenging to you? Why might this be the case?
- 03 Spend a few minutes in silence/listening to God, where God might be inviting you to experience the powerful gifts of the Spirit in the transformation and liberating work of Christ?



THE SPIRIT WHO REVEALS WHO GOD IS

———— 2 Corinthians 10b-12 ————

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.

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One day, I felt led by the Holy Spirit to practice visio divina (holy seeing). Vision divina is a form of contemplative meditation where you look at an image and ask God to speak to you through it. However, instead of an image or an icon, I felt the Holy Spirit ask me to consider Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington Harbour).

As I looked at the ocean, I began to feel this overwhelming sense of how deep and wide the ocean is. I saw myself diving to the depths of the ocean, to the deepest of trenches, then rising again and finding myself in the vastness of the water around me with no land in sight. It was terrifying and beautiful. Then I felt the Holy Spirit speak: “Ponder and look on my vastness. See how far, how deep and wide my creation is. Think of the depth and breadth of my oceans. I hold these things

together in my hands.” In this moment, God revealed her nature through the Holy Spirit. God revealed to me a glimpse of her vastness, her power and her care for all creation.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul reminds us that the Holy Spirit reveals to us who God is. Paul says that we receive a Spirit who is from God “so that we may understand what God has freely given us.”

Through the Holy Spirit we learn the nature of God and what God has done for us. However, this comes with a challenge. To know more of who God is challenges us to act in a way which is consistent with her nature.

In particular, this revelation challenged me in two ways. First, it reminded me to trust in God for everything, for the God that loves me is wider and deeper than the ocean. If God can create and care in such wonderful beauty,

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could he not care for me in the same way? Second, it challenged me to love and care for others in the same way. If God can care for the vastness of the ocean, there was a challenge for us to care and love creation and the people around us.

We must be ready and listening to the Spirit to reveal who God is. To reveal God's nature to us. As in this moment, the Spirit reveals who God is and, in doing so, challenges us to act in a way consistent with her nature.

QUESTIONS

- 01 Have you experienced the Holy Spirit reveal who God is to you? What did that look like?
- 02 Has the Holy Spirit challenged you to act by revealing God's nature to you? What did that look like?
- 03 Spend a few minutes in silence/listening to God, how may the Spirit be revealing the nature of God to you?



THE SPIRIT WHO EQUIPS

Romans 12:5-13

So in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your[a] faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

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Recently for a birthday present I was given a voucher to take a course of my choosing – weaving, a cooking class, chainmail making. There were heaps of options. But to me, the real gift wasn't the voucher, it was the opportunity to grow in something.

The Holy Spirit is a gift giver giving us gifts from God in order that we might grow into “the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13). Some of these gifts mentioned here are prophecy, service, teaching, encouragement, generosity, leadership, and mercy. When the Holy Spirit gives us these gifts, it is also a statement about the nature of the giver – our God is generous and loves us.

And yet there's a key difference between a gift given by a friend, and the gifts given by the Holy Spirit. While our culture is saturated with mantras of personal growth and self-help,

the gifts of God are always given for the wellbeing of the whole. We grow, in order that we might participate more fully and generously in the family of Christ.

Gifts are given to us from the very source of love, that we might use and enjoy them and grow in love ourselves. Notice also the character attributes in this passage – joyful, faithful, generous, diligent, merciful, and persistent. Using our gifts is an invitation to be formed more deeply in the way of love.

We are given a gift, but at the same time we up some of our independence by choosing to be part of a bigger whole. We become one part of Christ's body on earth. There is joy in that connection and belonging, but there is sacrifice in the belonging too. Our unique gift is for the life of our brothers and sisters, because we belong to one another.

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Our gift is not just to serve our own interests, but to serve the needs of all God's children.

So the giver is loving, the gifts are good, and we share them together. But where is this body of Christ actually headed? What's its purpose?

Recently I heard a way of seeing God's call upon humans as two mandates, given to all people as core to what it means to be human. Firstly, the creation

mandate to care for the earth and its abundance. And secondly, to make disciples of Christ everywhere. Sharing Jesus so that he might be recognised by all as Lord and friend.

As people created by God and people called by God we are given responsibility and work to do, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to equip us for this work.

QUESTIONS

- 01 Do you have a sense that the Holy Spirit has given you a gift? What does that look like?
- 02 Where have these gifts equipped you to fulfil the responsibility and work we are called to do?
- 03 Spend a few minutes in silence/listening to God, where might the Spirit be revealing gifts that the Holy Spirit has equipped you with? Where might God be calling you to use these gifts?

