

- We are in the last week of our series on the Holy Spirit. Next week we begin a new series where we are going through the book of Nehemiah.
- Today, though, we are going to finish our 5-week series on the Spirit.
- In week 1, we saw that when we were designed to live in step with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives in us when we follow Jesus, but we are supposed to be regularly filled with the Holy Spirit.
- In week 2, we looked at what being filled looked like. We can pursue this filling which brings boldness, power and the chance to hear God's voice.
- In week 3, we took that further to examine what it meant to hear the Spirit. We need to expect it, to practice our listening skills and then lean in to what he says, to respond and obey.
- Last week, we talked about cultivating the Holy Spirit's presence, so that we are filled and hear from him regularly.
- It sounds simple. It looks straight forward.
- What happens when we are derailed? What happens when we find ourselves out of the river of the Spirit's presence and in the woods? How can we tell and how to we get back?
- We want to live our lives full of the Spirit. We love it when the Spirit speaks to us, speaks through us, brings us into situations where the kingdom advances. We are thrilled when the Spirit speaks to our hearts and souls.
- As life goes along, we get injured. We get bruised and wounded by others. We get busy or bored with routine. We get distracted by new and exciting things. We struggle with pain. We sin and have guilt and shame. We are tempted to give up and just do what we've always done. To abandon this quest for the Spirit's ongoing, filling presence.
- The Spirit is always inviting us to walk in step with him.
- He loves us too much not to.

Galatians 5:25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

- **STAYING IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT REQUIRES CONSTANT ADJUSTMENTS.**

- We have a propensity to wander. To give up. To get out of step with the Spirit.
- John, Jesus best and closest friend, wrote about this.
- John wrote to a community of Christ-followers, disciples. John was old. We believe that he wrote this letter or treatise as a very old man – probably in his 80's or even 90's. He had seen his fellow disciples tortured and murdered. He had seen the church spread across the empire. He had experienced persecution himself.
- And as he encountered those who were distorting the teachings of Jesus and contradicting how people should live and pursue Jesus, he thought back all those years, probably repeating what he had taught over and over.

1 John 1:5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

- **STAYING IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT REQUIRES CONSTANT ADJUSTMENTS.**

- The biggest danger to staying in step with the Spirit is sin, because:

I. Deal with sin quickly because sin damages relationship.

- A. Sin damages our vertical relationship.

6 If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth.

- We cannot live in close fellowship with him and live consistently in sin. We can say that we are close to God but when we sin, we are walking away from him and into darkness.
- We are walking away from the river.
- Understand, God will love us even if we sin, that never changes. But we can't walk in sin and dwell in the river because spiritual darkness destroys true relationship.
- It impairs our relationship with God. He still loves and he is omnipresent, but the sense of cultivated presence will diminish.
- That's because at its roots, sin is a focus on self. We want God to fill us, but we want to live life on our terms. It just doesn't work that way.
- But it is never only with God.
- B. Sin damages our horizontal relationships.

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.

- The corollary statement, the implication, is that when we sin, it damages our relationship with the people around us.
- It impairs our relationship with others.
- There is a principle here. You cannot have healthy relationships past the health of your soul.
- If your soul health is a 5, then the healthiest relationship you will have is a 5. The only way to grow this is to change. That's why must move towards soul health to improve our relationships.
- The only way to get back into the river of the Spirit, to get back in step, is to admit it, repent it and ask for forgiveness.
- Here is another principle. When we do this with others, there is idea that the apology and forgiveness need to match the offense.
- Have you ever hurt someone, you apologized, they graciously forgave, and then it comes up again later and you think, "Hey, I thought we were done with this?"
- When the Spirit points something out, we must allow the weight of our sin to penetrate our heart. To feel the impact it had. To understand it. Be slow to apologize, not reluctant to apologize.
- **STAYING IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT REQUIRES CONSTANT ADJUSTMENTS.**

II. The Spirit is the great revealer.

- We just have to listen.

5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

- God is light. That light reveals issues and problems and sins in our lives.
- The Spirit shows us where we are out of alignment with God. He reveals anything that leave us in darkness and out of step with the Spirit.
- When he reveals truth, it is his gift to us. Truth is not an intrusion, it is a gift. It doesn't feel like it, but God is trying to bring us closer into step with the Spirit.
- Spirit of God shines light into our souls for three purposes.
- A. He reveals our sin.
- We need to deal with sin – he is the one who reveals it.
- Don't ignore when your soul is amiss. When something doesn't feel right – when God disrupts our soul, ask God for wisdom.
- Our sinful nature and the Spirit are in conflict. Sinful nature relies on self to fulfill our inner longings. But it is never grateful and never satisfied.
- Our response to his light is to be "Yes, God, that is true about me."

- Sin is never without consequences. Yet we tolerate sin. There is always a price to our disobedience. Don't give up if you feel frustrated.
- The only way you are defeated by sin is when you quit and lay down in the gutter, or become content with living in the darkness.
- B) He reveals our secrets.
- Secrets are destructive

Psalm 32:1 Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. 2 Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit. 3 When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. 4 For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. 5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD." And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

- David's secret sin was destroying him.
- We cannot live in step with the Spirit, in the river, and live with secrecy. Some of you are living with secrets. Secrets that the Spirit wants to gently bring into the light. Not because he wants to shame us, but because he wants to free us.
- Sometimes physical problems arise from secret sins.
- I guarantee it will cost you and me our pride if we are going to be full time river dwellers.
- C) He increases our self-awareness

Proverbs 20:5 The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out.

- We will never rise above the level of our self-awareness
- For example, if you are completely unaware that you are a fearful person, or unaware of how your fear influences you, you will try to control and manipulate others out of fear. Even when people confront, you will make excuses, justify and explain away your behavior.
- The Spirit of God will give you opportunities to see the truth about yourself.
- *"It is a sad fate for a man to die too well known to everyone else and still unknown to himself."* (Francis Bacon)
- The Spirit does not force truth on us. He offers it. We are to receive humbly. To reject truth is to reject God himself.
- We can be more interested in being right than in right relationship.
- Lack of self-awareness is destructive.
- Self-awareness does not give you victory over something. It is like a gateway towards healing and change. Lack of self-awareness is like a lid.
- So, we must listen.
- To listen is to honor someone – Spirit wants to be listened to.
- **STAYING IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT REQUIRES CONSTANT ADJUSTMENTS.**

III. Develop your dashboard lights.

- We don't listen because it's risky and we don't want to take the risk.
- *"We can act on fear or we can act on faith but we cannot act on both. If we are going to listen to the Spirit, we are going to have to take risks that make us uncomfortable . . . We need to risk more than we are comfortable with in order to follow the prompting of the Spirit."* (Rob Reimer)
- We don't listen because we aren't developing ears to hear.
- What we need to do is develop the dashboard lights for your soul.

ILLUSTRATION / STORY

Illustration: Check engine light – ignore it, put a piece of black tape over it. Will always lead to problems later.

- Irritation and lack of compassion
- Defensiveness.
- Lack of passion for godly things – extra concern for what doesn't matter.
- Ongoing heaviness in my soul – not connected to circumstance.
- Anxiousness which results in trying to control things.
- Jesus is on the throne in perfect peace. He is never wringing his hands and saying, "What am I going to do about you?" He isn't surprised by my circumstances nor do they alarm him.
- We cannot let our hearts get hard.
- Pride. Humility welcomes the presence of God, pride pushes him out of the center. Pride is the greatest enemy for staying in step with the Spirit because it hardens our heart.
- Shields. From hurt. Self-protection – through anger, withdrawal, defensiveness. But a shield is indiscriminate – blocks out God as well as that person.
- Disappointment. From experiences, people, goals, expectations.
- Mid-life crisis happen because of unprocessed disappointments.
- Some try to recapture the energy and passion they felt when younger. They are on a quest to feel alive again. When they can't find it, they give up. Become bitter, defeated, cynical, negative people.
- For many of us, this leads, not to a theological crisis, but a crisis of the soul.
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IV. The Spirit is the great restorer.

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

- Remember, the Spirit wants to be living in step with him.
- God forgives sin and God redeems suffering.
- There will always be suffering in this world.
- God is so good, and Jesus' death on the cross is so powerfully redemptive, that God can take even the worst things that life throws at us and make something good out of them.
- Instead of asking "Why?", ask "How?" How can God redeem this in my life?
- Keep praying. Keep worshipping. Keep reading and meditating on Scripture. Keep on spending time alone. Keep on with silence and solitude.

Proverbs 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

- Never forget what God has told you in the light when you are wandering in the darkness.
- Battle for the right perspective.
- Perspective does not change our circumstances, but it does change us.
- Instead of spending so much time trying to control our outer world, try to win the battle for our inner world.
- This means grieving the bad. The pain and losses. It reminds us we are passing through. This is not where our true citizenship resides.
- This means giving thanks for the good. Grumbling and lack of gratitude contributes to mistrust and ultimately, rebellion. Thanksgiving is a discipline and leads to trust.
- The eternal perspective – "Heaven will resolve all of Earth's problems and fulfill all of God's promises."
- **STAYING IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT REQUIRES CONSTANT ADJUSTMENTS.**

- I never want to leave the river – too many times we get out of the river and don't even realize we left it behind. Until one day we wake up and realize it is far away.
- Peace always follows surrender. Where there is no surrender, there is no peace. But when I surrender, I have peace.
- Deal with sin quickly. When the Spirit reveals our sins, our secrets or challenges our self-awareness, respond to it.
- Pay attention to your dashboard. When the lights go on, go to the Spirit. Listen to him. Because he is not simply the great revealer, he is the great restorer.