

How's That Workin' For You?
Making Decisions That Will Bless Your Life
"Discerning The Promptings Of The Holy Spirit"
(Part 4)

Intro: Salmon / Steelhead are just fascinating fish. WHY? They have this built in navigational system that after spending 3-4 years in the ocean, it leads them back to the exact stream they were born in. (By the time I catch a steelhead on Eagle Creek – it has 1000s of miles in the ocean / found the Columbia / 90 miles to Portland / Willamette / Clackamas / then Eagle Creek / avoiding 100s of other rivers. Wow! Wouldn't it be great to have a navigational system like that in us! We do. It's called the Holy Spirit! We need to learn to listen to Him.

- How do I discern the promptings of the Holy Spirit in my life so that I can make decisions that God will bless? How do I discern God's navigational system?

I. Understand The Role Of The Holy Spirit In Your Life

A. Holy Spirit indwells every follower of Christ

I John 4:13 "We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit." (NIV)

1. Once a person gives their life to Jesus Christ, they are indwelt by His Spirit. This Spirit is called the Holy Spirit. He is the third personality of what we call the Trinity. God the Father / Son / and Holy Spirit. Three separate persons of the Godhead that make up one God. We relate to a Triune God.
2. I am not here to explain to you the trinity this morning. People have been trying to do this for 2000 years. The Bible doesn't try to explain it either. It just states it as a fact. I am here to try to explain how we relate to the third member of the trinity...
3. Every person is created by God with a spirit. There is a material part of each person and then there is an immaterial part. Our spirit is part of this. Because we are spiritual people we have the ability to relate to a spiritual God. (Made in His image.)
4. Once we accept Christ, the spiritual connection is made and God sends His Holy Spirit to indwell every follower of Christ so that we can communicate with each other. (The wireless connection takes place – connected)
5. If you're a follower of Christ, you are a possessed person! God lives in you...His Spirit!

B. The Holy Spirit functions as our permanent Helper

John 14:16 "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you." (NLT)

1. The Holy Spirit is here to be our advocate. Here's what it means...
 - **one that pleads the cause of another
 - **one that defends or maintains a cause or proposal
 - **one that supports or promotes the interests of another
2. The Holy Spirit is here to help us...he pleads for us before the throne of God / He

defends us / He supports us and promotes God's interests and plans for our lives. He is here to help us stay on God's path of blessing. He never leaves us!

3. Based on this definition, the role the Holy Spirit has in our lives is a very active role not a passive one. God has given us a permanent Helper that He places in us to actively keep us on the path of blessing. (Doesn't matter if you're aware of Him

C. The Holy Spirit acts as our truth Guide

*John 14:17 "He is the Holy Spirit, who **leads into all truth**. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you."* (NLT)

*John 16:13 "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will **guide you into all truth**. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard."* (NLT)

1. The Holy Spirit only guides us according to what is true. Notice what He is called..."Spirit of truth". Therefore, if you don't believe in truth...any absolute standard, you are shutting down the work of the Holy Spirit in your life before He ever gets started. WHY? Because you refuse to believe in what He provides!
 2. He's not the Spirit of suggestions / options / the Spirit of multiple paths. No! He is the Spirit of TRUTH! He only speaks / guides / and leads according to truth that is absolute.
 3. Because He is the Spirit of Truth, we can always trust Him. He will never lead us down a wrong path or road. He will never steer us in meaningless directions. He is 100% accurate 100% of the time.
 4. He is our internal GPS from God for the journey of life (God's Positioning System) The Holy Spirit will always position your life for blessing!
- All this sounds great, so why don't I experience these things in my life? If the Holy Spirit is inside me, why do I feel so lost?

II. Remove The Hindrances Of Listening To The Holy Spirit

A. Sin hinders the Holy Spirit's role in our life

Eph. 4:30 "And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live..." (NLT)

I John 3:24 "Those who obey God's commandments remain in fellowship with him, and he with them..." (NLT)

1. Just because the Holy Spirit is inside us, doesn't mean we allow Him to lead our lives...doesn't mean we listen...doesn't mean we are automatically blessed. Sin hinders the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. (Shuts it down)
2. Because the Holy Spirit is a person not an "IT", we can actually bring Him sorrow. We can either be in fellowship with Him or out of fellowship with Him. This is why obedience is so important. It keeps us connected...in fellowship.
3. BUT, since none of us are perfect, we must practice this thing called confession. Confessing our sin to God and embracing His forgiveness freely offered to us through Christ. This re-connects us...this re-established the fellowship.

4. This is why delaying confessing our sin does us more harm than good. The place of blessing is “in fellowship” with the Spirit. The longer I stay out of fellowship, the longer I operate on my own / own resources / own wisdom / the more mistakes I’m going to make...
5. Any time we have areas of our lives where we refuse to walk in obedience, we are shutting down the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives. You may be wondering why you’re not hearing the Holy Spirit. Here’s your answer. When we’re not walking in obedience, the only voice from the Holy Spirit we hear is the one convicting us.

B. Busyness hinders the Holy Spirit’s role in our life

I Thess. 5:19 “Do not stifle the Holy Spirit.” (NLT) We can stifle or hinder the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives in a variety of ways. Busyness is certainly one of the most common in our day and age. We’re too distracted to hear.

Is. 30:15 “This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: “Only in returning to me and resting in me will you be saved. In quietness and confidence is your strength. But you would have none of it.” (NLT)

1. Sometimes we are just as guilty as the nation of Israel to whom this was written. God calls us to turn to Him in rest and quietness and we would have none of it!
2. When it comes to allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us, it’s not that He is not speaking. The real issue is that we are moving at such a hectic pace, it’s impossible to hear! We expect the Holy Spirit to talk to us on our terms. Doesn’t work like this.
3. We hear the Holy Spirit in quietness / in rest / when we’re at peace / when our minds are not so cluttered. The only way to experience this in our culture is to create times like this daily.
4. This is why we talk about creating the habit of a daily time with God. It’s for prayer / the word / but also for listening. God communicates to us in these times. This is where He leads / guides / speaks into our lives. Decisions made in the quiet moments gives you confidence in the chaos. – explain
5. If I receive a directive from God when I am at peace / in fellowship / and I heard His voice; when life then gets crazy and I have opportunity to doubt the path I’m on...I remember what I heard in the quietness and choose to not doubt it!

C. Doubt hinders the Holy Spirit’s role in our life

James 1:5-6 “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.” (NIV)

1. If we don’t believe the Holy Spirit is going to speak to us, then we’re not going to be listening for His voice. According to the word of God, doubting makes us unstable, blown and tossed by the winds of culture and opinions. WHY?
2. Because if we’re not believing in and listening for the Holy Spirit, we will be

listening and believing in other voices giving us directions. This makes us unstable and life unpredictable.

3. Doubt also happens after we do hear His voice. You may come to church...hear Him speak to your heart...make a decision to follow...then you doubt what you heard come Monday. Maybe that wasn't really God...Maybe I shouldn't...
4. Doubt shuts down the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Think about how many times you thought you heard the Lord speak to you on a Sunday only to doubt it after you leave the building?

D. Ignoring the word of God hinders the Holy Spirit's role in our life

Ps. 119:105 "Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path." (NLT)

1. If the Holy Spirit is a guide of truth...called the Spirit of truth...it makes sense then that He uses the written truth of God's word to lead us. It was the Holy Spirit that inspired the authors to write it in the first place. These words are HIS!
2. Therefore, ignoring the written word can affect how much we hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. WHY? Because He will speak to us through His written word. He will bring to mind the word we've read.
3. I've lost count how many times the Holy Spirit has used the word of God to speak to me and give me direction. It's uncanny! When I am asking the Lord for direction regarding this church I am always looking for Him to guide me from the Word.
4. There are times I'm reading and asking and He will take me to a specific passage and tell me this is for Foothills. In fact, I have another passage of Scripture to share with all of you on Kickoff weekend regarding the next 10-15 years of Foothills.
5. In fact, some events have happened so fast that I have to share some details next Sunday with you. The Lord is on the move and we're trying to keep up.
6. This is yet another reason why we need to be people of this book. This is why we need to be in this book every day! To not be will hinder the Spirit's role.

III. Practice Listening And Following The Holy Spirit

A. Acknowledge the voice of the Holy Spirit

- Explain the story of Samuel in I Sam. 3

I Sam. 3:10 "And the LORD came and called as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel replied, "Speak, your servant is listening." (NLT)

1. This story and Samuel's response is just a great example of how we need to live every day. To every day acknowledge the fact that God wants to speak to us daily and to say, "Speak, your servant is listening."
2. The more we acknowledge the Holy Spirit wanting to communicate with us / lead us / guide us / the more we will hear.
3. It's like when my wife tries to talk to me while I'm watching the outdoor channel or Football. I don't even hear what she's trying to say. BUT, if I turn away from the TV and acknowledge the fact that she is trying to talk to me...I hear so much better. "Speak now my dear, for your husband is listening."

4. It drives us all crazy when we think we are being ignored. How often do we do this to the Holy Spirit? Let's get in the habit of daily acknowledging the fact that He wants to speak to us.

B. Recognize the voice of the Holy Spirit

John 10:3 "The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out." (NLT)

1. There are a lot of voices in this world telling us what to believe in and what to do. God wants us to learn to be able to recognize His voice and distinguish it from all the others. It is different than all others.
- Discovery channel - Voice recognition of fur seal pups. (slide) Here are 1000s of fur seals and their pups. The mom goes out to sea to feed and then comes back and has to find her pup again in all the chaos. This is called voice recognition. The pup can recognize its mothers voice. This is a great example how we need to be.
2. How to recognize His voice
 - You will hear His voice when you are quiet
 - His voice will always be consistent with His word
 - His voice will always produce peace / assurance / joy /comfort / conviction
 - His voice always makes you want to be closer to Him – it attracts us to Him
3. The more you practice this, the easier it will become to distinguish.

C. Act on the voice of the Holy Spirit

*Gal. 5:25 "Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading **in every part of our lives.**" (NLT)*

1. It's not enough to acknowledge; it's not enough to even hear; we are called to follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. It all comes down to action...all comes down to obedience.
2. Making decisions based upon the Holy Spirit's input into our lives is the path of blessing. God doesn't expect us to be smart enough to figure life out. He wants us to learn to listen and follow.
3. Notice also this verse says EVERY area of our lives. We need to understand that the Holy Spirit is in our lives to transform every part, not the ones we want Him to. There's not a part of our lives where He doesn't want to lead us down God's path of blessing.
4. As you think about your life, can you identify areas where you know God has been speaking into your life and you have yet to follow? Maybe because you're afraid / because of the unknown / because of doubt / or maybe because you're still not convinced His way is best.
5. Many of you have heard me say that there comes a time when you just have to cross the line...you just have to make a choice to trust God and let Him prove Himself to you. Can you make this kind of a choice today? Can you make a decision to follow...can you let the holy Spirit lead you to make a decision He will bless?

- How's Life Working For You? If it's not workin' very well, God wants you to know...
 - That the Holy Spirit is in you to lead and guide you
 - For that to be a reality, we must remove the hindrances that stifle the Holy Spirit
 - You can actually learn to hear and follow the Holy Spirit and the time to begin this adventure is today! This is the blessed way to live!