

7-SESSION BIBLE STUDY

NEVER

PARENTING IN THE POWER
OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

ALONE

JEANNIE CUNNION

N E V E R

**PARENTING IN THE POWER
OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

A L O N E

JEANNIE CUNNION

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ISBN: 978-1-0877-2905-3 • Item: 005829239

Dewey decimal classification: 231.3

Subject heading: HOLY SPIRIT / MOTHERHOOD / PARENTING

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Printed in the United States of America

Lifeway Women Bible Studies, Lifeway Church Resources,
One Lifeway Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0152

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeannie Cunnion is the author of *Don't Miss Out*; *Mom Set Free* book and Bible study; and *Parenting the Wholehearted Child*. As a self-described grace-clinger, Jeannie's writing is woven with wisdom, humility, humor, and a contagious love for the good news. She is also a beloved Bible teacher and frequent speaker at women's conferences and parenting events around the country.

Jeannie holds a master's degree in social work, and her writing has been featured on outlets such as *The Today Show*, *Fox News*, *The 700 Club*, *LIFE Today*, and *Focus on the Family*.

Jeannie and her husband, Mike, are the proud parents of five boys who range from five to twenty-four. Her hobbies include grocery shopping—because, five boys—and praying—because again, five boys. When not cheering for her boys on the sidelines, you'll most likely find her singing worship music off-key in her kitchen while trying not to burn dinner again. To know Jeannie is to know her deep love for Danita's Children's Home in Haiti.

She would love to connect with you on Instagram @JeannieCunnion and on her website at jeanniecunnion.com.

INTRODUCTION

Of *all* the things I thought God would lead me to write about in my next Bible study, the power of the Holy Spirit wasn't one of them. I didn't see this one coming.

Maybe you can relate? Of all the Bible studies you thought you'd explore about parenting, you didn't expect to study how the presence and power of the Holy Spirit can make such a radical difference in how you lead and love your kids. Or maybe this is exactly what you've been waiting for and knew you needed!

Wherever you land, I'm just so grateful you're holding this study in your hands, because the Holy Spirit plays an absolutely vital role in our ability to be the moms we long to be. To be totally transparent, this isn't a truth I understood or appreciated until I began to study the full scope of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives. It was only in following the Lord's leading to write this study that I began to be blown away by what I discovered and encountered in the beautiful but often neglected person of the Holy Spirit. All of that to say, I offer this study to you with great humility, praying that it will help you grow in your knowledge of and personal relationship with the Spirit.

THE BACKSTORY

My desire to have a deeper understanding of the Holy Spirit's power began about a year after my last Bible study, *Mom Set Free*, was released. *Mom Set Free* is about embracing and enjoying the freedom for which Christ has set us free as women and as moms. But while I was busy speaking at conferences about our freedom in Christ, I began to struggle again at home with patterns and fears from which I'd been set free. Yes, we are indeed forgetful people who never outgrow our need to hear the hope of the gospel every day.

Around this same time, I was invited to speak to a lovely group of moms about relying on the Holy Spirit to accomplish His work in our kids' lives. When I finished speaking, we opened up the discussion for Q&A, and that was when one wise woman asked a significant question: "I know we are supposed to rely on the Holy Spirit, but how do we actually do that? How do we access His power and teach it to our kids?" The truth is, I didn't have a very helpful answer for her, beyond explaining how Scripture tells us to ask for His help and trust He will show up.

That's when I began to grapple with the question, *Do I really know how to parent in the power of the Holy Spirit, or have I settled for parenting in my own power?*

After months of reflection and paying attention to patterns in my parenting, I knew the honest answer was I've mostly settled for my own power. I wasn't fully dependent on the Holy Spirit's help. This revelation led me to a passionate pursuit of understanding who the Holy Spirit is, what the Holy Spirit does, and how I could become a more Spirit-empowered mom.

What I discovered as I searched the Scriptures is what propelled me to write this study: I was set free by Jesus, but I was still trying to live free by Jeannie.

I was still trying to parent in my natural power rather than in the Spirit's supernatural power. I was still trying to play the Holy Spirit's role in my kids' lives. I was still trying to meet the demands of motherhood without the help of the Helper. And, boy, was I ever settling for less than what God wanted to do in me, produce through me, and put on display for my kids to see.

I want you to know I am not attempting to answer all of our questions about the Holy Spirit in this study. The Holy Spirit is as mysterious as He is made-known, and questions will remain around the more complex and controversial conversations we could (but won't) have about the Holy Spirit. This is not an extensive theological treatise about the Holy Spirit but a personal invitation to better know and enjoy Him.

This sparked a deep desire to personally know and encounter all of God—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Mamas, we need help! God designed us to need Him and then He gave us the help of the Holy Spirit to fill our need! He gave us holy help, a help beyond our comprehension!

We are *never alone* to navigate any of the challenges or trials or hardships we encounter in our parenting. I think it's fair to say we often carry huge backpacks filled with heavy burdens. But the Spirit of God wants to lighten our loads by taking those burdens we were never meant to carry and laying them before the Father on our behalf. He wants to champion us!

He wants to ...

- show us His power when the pressures of parenting feel crushing;
- take us by the hand and guide us as we guide our children;
- put truth on our tongues to share with our struggling teens;

- bring hope into our hurting hearts for our prodigal daughters and sons;
- infuse us with strength when the endless tasks of raising toddlers are overwhelming us;
- increase our capacity when we say, “It’s too much. I can’t do this another day”;
- bring peace to our chaotic minds;
- fill us with joy in what typically feels like mundane deeds;
- cultivate deeper intimacy in our relationship with Jesus;
- comfort us in our loneliness or sadness;
- counsel us as we make choices on behalf of our children;
- absolutely assure us that His presence in us is greater than anything we will encounter;
- fill us with God’s love and produce God-glorifying fruit in our lives for our children to witness.

This is what He delights to do! The question is, will we let Him?

I wasn’t fully letting Him. But here’s the thing, neglecting the Holy Spirit wasn’t an intentional decision. I simply didn’t know very much about why His specific work in my life mattered so much. I think that’s how it is for a lot of us. We just don’t know.

I’ve been following Jesus since I was eight years old. I know and believe the core doctrines of Christianity, among them that the Holy Spirit is an equal and essential member of the Trinity. I wholeheartedly recite the creeds. I sing worship songs about the Spirit’s power, and I had plenty of exposure to His work as a preacher’s kid in a charismatic church. But I didn’t know all of the benefits I was missing out on by not being more aware of and reliant on the Spirit’s presence and power in my life. I undervalued His personhood, and I underestimated His power.

But God, in His infinite kindness, heard my daily prayers for a fuller knowledge and experience of His love in Jesus, and He answered those prayers by reintroducing me to His Spirit.

AN INVITATION TO ENJOY THE HOLY SPIRIT

I believe the Holy Spirit is about to blow us away with the difference He can make in the high calling of motherhood. I can say that to you with such confidence because through the writing of this study, I have begun to cherish how the Holy Spirit brings intimacy in my relationship with Jesus. I have become expectant for how His supernatural power will continue to strengthen my heart and manifest in

my mothering. I've come to discover how much better life is when I stay in step with the Spirit, what a better mother I am when I'm not trying to do it without Him, and what a disaster I am when I don't take the help! And I'm confident this is what will unfold in your life too, if you come open to receive all that He wants to do in you and for you.

If we invite the Holy Spirit to do business with us and are willing to open our hearts to the places where He wants to grow us in obedience and trust, we can confidently know that He will give us the grace to receive it. He speaks into our broken places and our battle with the flesh with grace.

This is the best news! *All* of God is accessible to us, and this will be our aim. He's not withholding His Spirit from us. On the contrary, He's eagerly waiting for us to welcome His activity in our lives—activity that will radically change how we walk alongside our children under the sovereignty of God.

Also, before we dive in, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention this: If you haven't put your trust in Jesus, and you don't have the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence, please keep reading, as this study is every bit as much for you! The very fact that you're reading this tells me God is in passionate pursuit of you, patiently waiting for you to say yes to Jesus and receive His Spirit.

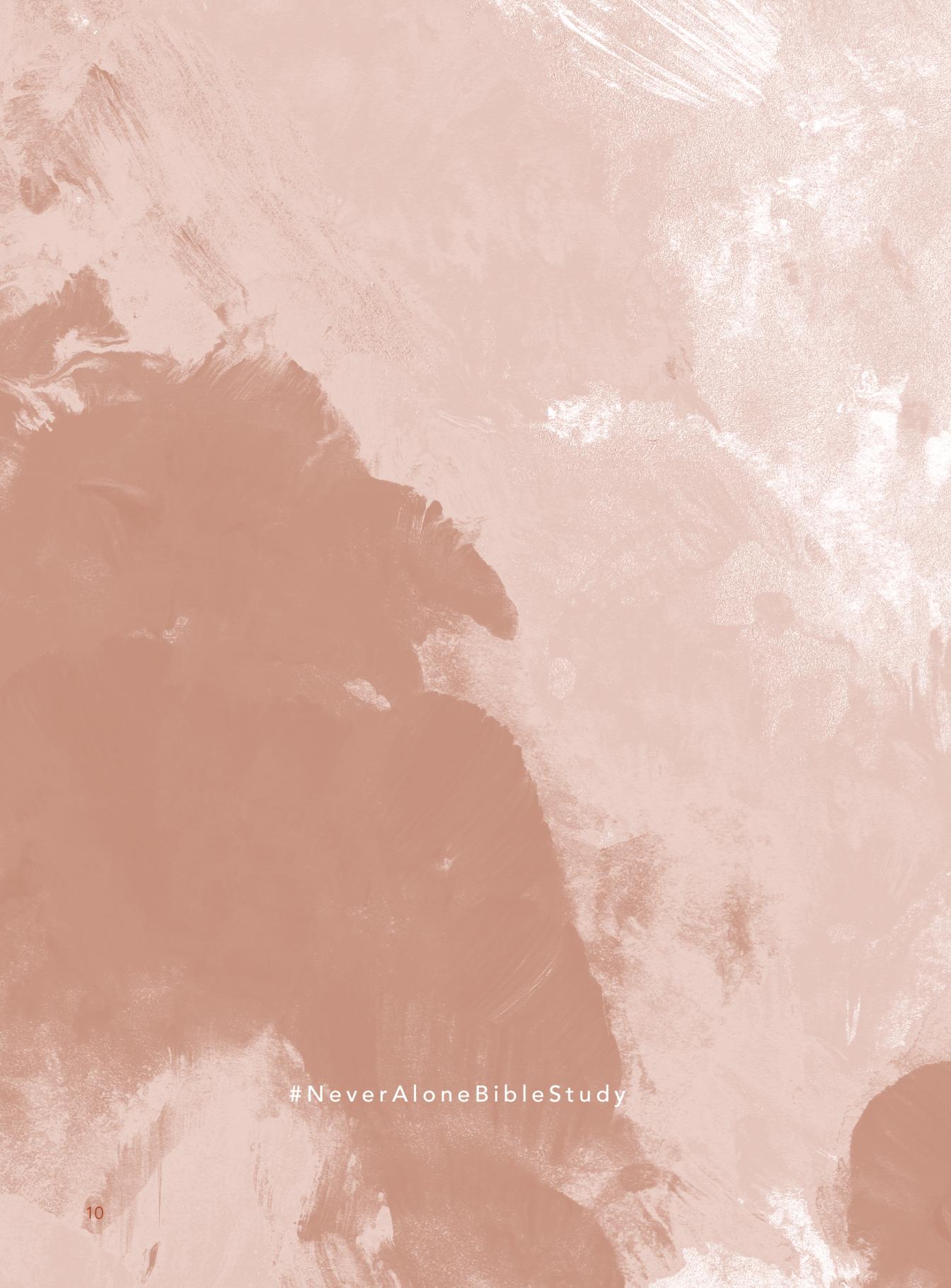
Or maybe your faith life feels dull and tired, and you've wondered what you're missing. Or maybe you've simply been longing to go deeper in your faith. I hope you'll see this study as an invitation to know how the Holy Spirit brings vibrancy to and greater intimacy in your relationship with Jesus.

Or maybe you already enjoy the Holy Spirit as a close companion, but you're eager to discover more about how to parent in His power.

Wherever you land, I am so glad you are holding this study in your hand. Sister, I am so expectant imagining how our relationships with Jesus will flourish in the wake of our awakening to the Holy Spirit, and how His love will fill our hearts, overflow into our homes, and impact how our children walk in the knowledge and power of the Three-in-One, the eternal triune God.

So let's ask God to manifest His Spirit in our lives and in our parenting in a fresh way, with the ultimate goal being hearts enlarged for Jesus. That is the Holy Spirit's ministry and mission after all—to make much of Jesus!

Jeannie



#NeverAloneBibleStudy

SESSION 1

THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

When our son Cal was about to turn thirteen, I asked a group of men in his life to write him a letter addressing what attributes they saw in Cal and what wisdom they wanted to impart to him. I assembled the letters in a journal we gave him on his birthday. The group included relatives, longtime family friends, coaches, church leaders, and men in our community who do life closely alongside us and know Cal well.

The letters were beyond anything I could have expected. I read them through tears of gratitude for the thoughtfulness they held. What an extraordinary gift we got to give our son. Because we found this gift to be so powerful in Cal's life, we decided to continue the tradition with all of our boys. So when our son Brennan recently turned thirteen, we gave him a journal filled with letters as well. Again, I was blown away by the beauty and thoughtfulness of them. But there is one letter in particular I want to share with you, because really, it's for all of us. It was written by our friend Blaze. He and his wife, Desi, lead a church in our area, and they have become cherished family friends. After Blaze described the unique strengths he sees in Brennan, he wrote:

Your job, as you grow into a man, is to learn how to steward the gifts the Holy Spirit has given you and to grow in the anointing that is on your life. I wish I could give you the road map on how to do that but that would defeat God's purpose, which is for you to go to Him. But I can promise you this—your life will be infinitely greater than you could ever imagine if you stay close to God. The gifts the Holy Spirit has given you will take you far without Him—but with Him—you will go places you could have never dreamed of! He will do more with you, through you, and around you than you thought possible. Trust me on this!

Blaze's letter to Brennan reminded me that one of the primary roles in my life as a mom is to learn how to steward the gifts the Holy Spirit has given me and to grow in the anointing that is on my life. In doing so, the Holy Spirit is invited to do more with me, through me, and around me than I ever thought possible. This is true for each one of us.

DAY 1

HE IS FOR OUR GOOD

To begin, I think it will be helpful for us to ensure we have a solid understanding of the relationship between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, although we'll look at this much more closely in Session 2. For now, however, let's acknowledge together how the Holy Spirit unites us to the Son, Jesus Christ, to receive the life and love of the Father. The Spirit isn't an added feature of our salvation; He is the power and comfort we receive through our faith in Christ.

Put another way (and using some "begets" and "begottens" that may be uncommon to us but show up a lot in descriptions of the Trinity): the Triune persons are only differentiated by the eternal relations of origin. The Father eternally begets the Son. The Son is eternally begotten of the Father. The Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son. Then, when God acts in salvation history, the Father sends the Son. The Son is sent by the Father, and the Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son.

Now please draw a diagram of what I just described. Just kidding! But it's helpful to have this foundation to build on. OK, let's talk about how this is for our good.

Mamas, when we put our trust in Jesus, we become connected to the Godhead! As I mentioned in the Introduction, we become anointed by the Holy Spirit. Let's make sure we grasp the magnitude of this.

Read the following passages, making a note about what you learn from each:

John 14:16-17

John 16:7

Romans 8:11

Titus 3:5

In the Old Testament, people or things were anointed as a sign and symbol of their being set apart by God for a specific purpose or task. The Old Testament leaves us with an anticipation of a different kind of anointing that would come with the Holy

Spirit. We see an example of this when the prophet Samuel took oil and anointed a young shepherd boy named David. As David was anointed, the Holy Spirit “rushed upon” him from that day forward (1 Sam. 16:13).

In the New Testament, however, the Holy Spirit anointed Christians in a full, complete, and definitive manner (Acts 10:38; 1 John 2:20,27). When we are anointed by the Holy Spirit we are set apart as holy to reflect the holiness of the Father in Christ illuminated in our lives by the power of the Spirit. As a byproduct for us as parents, we gain the Spirit’s wisdom and strength to help us lead and love the children He has entrusted to us.

Do we appreciate the immeasurable benefits of this anointing? The truth is, I didn’t. I didn’t know what I was missing out on by not having a deeper knowledge of and relationship with the Holy Spirit. I didn’t realize how much I was living in my own strength and supply by not being more dependent on the Spirit.

My posture with the Spirit of God was one more of hesitation than cooperation, and not because I didn’t affirm the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I wholeheartedly did. My neglect of the Holy Spirit was primarily because I didn’t understand His distinct and essential role in a flourishing faith. The result? I had all of Him, but He didn’t have all of me.

Another obstacle to many of us enjoying the Holy Spirit is the many misconceptions about Him. I believe Satan has made it his mission to malign the reputation of the Holy Spirit, and sadly, he’s been pretty successful. He has kept too many Christians tiptoeing in the shallow end of the Living Water, barely experiencing the refreshment offered us in the Spirit, because we’re afraid of what we’ve seen done in His name.

Where does your relationship with the Holy Spirit land on this spectrum?

Hesitation  Cooperation

Fear  Trust

Skeptical  Curious

Dismissive  Welcoming

“The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence or being.”¹

What experiences have formed your opinion of or attitude toward the Holy Spirit? This is really important. Take some time to reflect and write.

If you're someone who has a deeply personal and trusting friendship with the Holy Spirit, recognize this is a precious and even rare gift, because I've had enough conversations with Christian women to know that many of us are comfortable with God the Father and God the Son, but we assume God the Spirit is reserved for the extremes: either the super-spiritual or the super-strange.

If we wouldn't ascribe to either of these extremes, we might assume His benefits are for other Christians but not for us. So we happily recite the seven words we often find in Scripture—"through the power of the Holy Spirit"—but rarely do we actually know how to live in His transforming power, or if we even want to. And we almost certainly don't consistently experience that power infusing our parenting.

TO OUR ADVANTAGE

Read John 16:5-7.

Depending on the translation of your Bible, you may have read how Jesus said it is "for your good" (NIV) or "to your advantage" (ESV) or "for your benefit" (CSB) that He returns to the Father.

In this passage Jesus prepared His disciples for His ascension and the forthcoming ministry of the Holy Spirit. This was by no means the first time Jesus spoke to His disciples about sending the Holy Spirit to be their (and our) Helper, but Jesus' departure at this point was imminent. He provided a final word of comfort and encouragement to His grieving disciples about the significance of the Holy Spirit's coming.

Why did Jesus say it was for our good? Refer to the end of verse 7 and write the reason below.

The Helper (the Advocate) is, of course, the Holy Spirit. But the disciples couldn't fathom how Jesus could say such a thing. *How could it ever be to our advantage or for our good that You go away and "only" leave us with Your Spirit?*



This wasn't just disappointing news to the disciples. It was devastating. They'd spent three years by His side and under His leadership, and this wasn't how they expected it to go down. They felt like Jesus was abandoning them when He was supposed to be setting up His kingdom among them!

Has your posture toward the Holy Spirit been similar to or different from how the disciples responded? Why?

My response has been much like the disciples' response. "But Jesus, I want You."

What the disciples didn't understand is that when Jesus returned to the Father, they would lose physical closeness with Jesus but gain something far more valuable: deeper connectivity to Jesus because God's Spirit would take up residence within them. They would each become the new temple in whom the Spirit would reside:

*Do you not know that you are God's temple
and that God's Spirit dwells in you?*

1 CORINTHIANS 3:16

You see, Jesus was "God with us." The Holy Spirit is "God in us." Jesus wasn't giving them less of Him; He was giving them even more.

OUR NEW BIRTHRIGHT

OPEN YOUR BIBLE and read Romans 8:9-11.

What did the Spirit of God do? (Refer to v. 11.) Where does this same Spirit of God live now? (Refer to the end of v. 11.)

In this teaching on the life-giving Spirit, Paul emphasized that if you have put your trust in Christ, you belong to God and have the Holy Spirit dwelling in you. A Spirit-filled life is your new birthright in Christ. This is why the Holy Spirit's presence is for our good! From His virgin conception, God the Son, Jesus Christ, experienced life as both human and divine. He came so He could identify with every



trial and temptation that comes at us. And He came so He could pay the price for the sins that enslave us.

But now, because of Jesus' glorification, the disciples would never be without God's presence and power in the Person of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit represents the love between God the Father and God the Son (Rom. 5:5; Eph. 4). Everything God would call the disciples to do would be fueled by the power of God inside them.

And that is just as true for us today as it was for the disciples more than two thousand years ago. We are never without everything we need when we have the Holy Spirit, and this extends to our parenting. Everything God has commissioned you to do as a parent is meant to be carried out in the resurrection power of His Spirit.

The Holy Spirit's power is absolutely essential to our ability to parent our children with God's transforming love. The Holy Spirit opens our hearts to Jesus and makes Jesus ever more beautiful to us. He matures us in the character of Christ through the growing pains of parenthood. He frees us from trying to play the role of our child's savior.

What else does the Holy Spirit do? He guides us, comforts us, counsels us, fills us with hope and joy, gives us life and peace, strengthens us in our inner being, communicates through us, prays for us, leads us in truth, empowers us to fight sin, illuminates Scripture, and advocates for us before the Father. He gives us supernatural gifts to build up the church and glorify God in our homes. He reminds us that absolutely nothing in all this world is better than Jesus. He glorifies Christ. This, and still more, is what we'll discover in the weeks ahead.

What surprises you most about the scope of the Holy Spirit's work in the paragraphs you just read? Explain.

What do you expect will be of most benefit in this season of parenting? Explain.

I'm so excited about what God is going to do in, through, and around us as we grow in deeper knowledge, dependence, and love of His Spirit.

DAY 2

HE MAKES HIS HOME IN US

You know how it feels when you're falling in love? You can't get enough of that person. You become completely preoccupied with them and want to spend as much time as you can in their presence. That can be true when you're falling in love in the early stage of a relationship, but it can be equally as true in seasons when you fall in love all over again with your spouse. I remember my preoccupation with my husband, Mike, when we started dating. We were set up by my childhood best friend, Morella. Oh yes, she was unashamed in her scheme to introduce me to one of her husband's best friends. Obviously her plan was successful because Mike has been my favorite human basically since the day I laid eyes on him. And the more I discovered about him, the more I wanted to know of him. Here is why I'm sharing this story with you: getting to know the Holy Spirit has felt a lot like those early days with Mike. The more I've gotten to know the Holy Spirit, the more I've wanted to know of Him. The more I've opened myself up to Him, the more trustworthy I've found Him to be. The Holy Spirit is so lovable. And likable.

The key difference is that, unlike the newness of my relationship with Mike when we were first dating, I'm not discovering the Holy Spirit for the first time. He's been with me all along. Actually, He hasn't just been with me. He's been dwelling in my heart since the day Jesus became my King. So it's been more like a rediscovery of the Holy Spirit. God has been reintroducing me to His Spirit and showing me how His indwelling presence allows me to enjoy the fullness of the Trinity. The more I've discovered about the Holy Spirit, who is the priceless treasure placed inside our hearts, the more I've desired to understand how He enables us to live a free and full life infused with God's power.

OPEN YOUR BIBLE and read John 14:15-17.

We will return to this passage many times throughout our study because there is so much truth to discover. But first let's unpack two points.

1. ANOTHER HELPER

Fill in the blanks based on verse 16:

*"And I will ask the Father, and he _____
_____."*

The Greek word translated “helper” in this verse is *paraklētos*, literally meaning “called to one’s side.”² But this wasn’t just any helper. Even more exciting is how Jesus said the Holy Spirit would be “another Helper.” The Greek word translated “another” in this verse is *allon*—which, in this context, translates “another of the same kind.”³ So Jesus assured the disciples that the Holy Spirit isn’t “less than” Him or even “similar” to Him, but just like Him!

The Holy Spirit is the power and presence of Christ. He shares the same essence as Jesus, and yet He is His own divine Person who serves a distinct purpose in a believer’s life. He continues what Jesus started. More on that later, but meanwhile, let’s stay focused on this word *paraklētos*.

Divine Person means we see His divinity in the characteristics of Deity ascribed to Him. He is eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient. (We’ll dive into this more in Session 2.)

Fill in the blanks based on what you read in the above paragraph:

The Holy Spirit is the _____ and _____ of Christ, but He is His own divine _____ who serves a distinct _____.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, so where the Spirit is, Jesus is.

In the ESV translation of John 14:16, the Holy Spirit is called “another Helper” by Jesus, but in the Amplified Bible—because *paraklētos* is too full of meaning to translate into just one word—the Holy Spirit is also called our “Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counselor, Strengthener, Standby.”

Briefly describe each of these roles the Holy Spirit plays. Use a dictionary to look up the meaning if you’d like, or just describe these roles in your own words.

A Comforter:

An Advocate:

An Intercessor:

A Counselor:

A Strengthener:

A Standby:

In your current season of parenting, which one these titles of God the Spirit brings the most relief and encouragement to you? Why?

2. INDWELLING GOD

The second thing I want us to notice from John 14:15-17 is from verse 17, when Jesus said, “You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”

What two ways did John say the Spirit would commune with the disciples?

The Holy Spirit isn't just beside you for companionship when you feel hopeless and overwhelmed. He isn't just in front of you to guide you as you lead your children, and He isn't just behind you to spur you on when you grow weary and want to give up.

God has put His Spirit *inside* you.

Let's do a quick glance back in history to see the significance of this. Read each verse below and then draw a line to match the verse with the corresponding preposition that defines the Holy Spirit's relationship to people at that time.

Judges 14:19

IN

John 14:17

UPON

1 Corinthians 6:19

WITH

“The operations of the Holy Spirit among humanity throughout human history may be defined by three words: ‘upon,’ ‘with,’ and ‘in.’ In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit came upon selected persons and remained for a season (Judg. 14:19). In the Gospels He is represented as dwelling with the disciples in the person of Christ (John 14:17). From the second chapter of Acts onward He is spoken of as being in the people of God (1 Cor. 6:19).”⁴

Living in the people of God, as Jesus told the disciples He would do, was an entirely new phenomenon because, prior to Pentecost, the Holy Spirit primarily resided upon people or with people.

Jesus referred to the words of John just before His ascension, affirming to the disciples that they would soon (“not many days from now”) receive this baptism (Acts 1:5). The promise was then fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon the 120 disciples in the upper room (Acts 2:4) and tongues of fire rested on each of them (Acts 2:3). To demonstrate publicly that He had given the Spirit, God miraculously enabled the 120 to speak in the foreign languages of the pilgrims present in Jerusalem that day (Acts 2:4-12).

Now Jesus was promising something so much greater. He said that though the disciples already knew the Holy Spirit because He was with them, now He would live *in* them. And the Spirit’s indwelling presence would not be earned through each disciple’s moral behavior, right theology, or good works. It would be God’s gift of grace bringing about radical change within their lives (Acts 2:38; 5:32; 1 Cor. 6:19).

Jesus knew the Holy Spirit would indwell ordinary people to transform them with His extraordinary power.

OPEN YOUR BIBLE and read Galatians 3:13-14.

Based on this passage, how do we receive the promised Holy Spirit through faith?

Faith in Jesus is the only prerequisite to receiving God’s Spirit. When we put our faith in Christ, God’s Spirit abides within us. The Holy Spirit is freely given to those who repent and believe in Jesus.

After the Spirit indwelt the disciples at Pentecost, they began to preach with boldness in the power of the Holy Spirit. We’ll get to Pentecost soon enough, but first I want us to read a passage that’s foundational to our study.

OPEN YOUR BIBLE and read Acts 2:38-39.



Peter didn't say "might"; He said "will." Peter didn't say we will "earn" the gift; he said we will "receive" it. The Holy Spirit is a free gift for all who believe.

Here's the thing: Every believer is given the gift of the Holy Spirit, but not every believer enjoys the gift.

Imagine this with me. On Christmas morning you find a wrapped gift under the tree with a tag on it. What are your choices? (1) You can read the tag, see it's for you, unwrap the gift and enjoy it entirely. (2) You can tear the paper and take a peek but leave it wrapped because it's not what you expected or hoped for. (3) You can leave the package under the tree untouched because you didn't read the tag and nobody told you it was for you.

What have you done with the gift of the Holy Spirit? Has it looked more like the first, second, or third option?

When you believe in the finished work of Christ—His life, death, and resurrection—on your behalf, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in your spirit. The Spirit's indwelling presence unites you to the Son, so that in Him, you receive the life and love of the Father. There is absolutely nothing ordinary or insignificant about you, because as a Christian, you are home to the Holy Spirit. He lives in your inner being and works on your behalf.

I'm pretty sure we too often neglect to notice all He does and wants to do in our hearts and in our homes, and I don't want us to miss it anymore!

Write a prayer of gratitude to God for choosing to take up residence inside you and for making all that is His, yours.

HOW DOES THIS EMPOWER MY PARENTING?

What difference does this make to us as mothers? A lot! See, I think most of us struggle with feeling insignificant and ordinary because culture is quick to devalue the hard and holy work of motherhood. So we load up our plates to prove we are



capable of doing more than “just” raising small humans to be kind, courageous God-fearing adults, and we feel guilty saying, “This is already a lot! I can barely do this well.”

But we as Christians know better, right? Or maybe we don't. Maybe we've felt the pressure to prove our value outside of being valued by God. Maybe we've lost sight of the truth that our highest calling is loving Jesus and making His love known. And yes, that work of making His love known begins inside our homes, but let's not miss this: Before God's love can be made known in our homes, it has to be made real in our hearts.

When have you struggled with believing the work you do as a mother matters? Maybe you know the “big things” matter, but have you felt unseen in the daily routine of cleaning the dirty dishes, driving the carpools, and disciplining the disobedience?

What comfort or confidence do you gain in knowing you are the home of God's Spirit in that work? Is your countenance lifted knowing your worth isn't defined by that work? Why or why not?

I can't think of anything more meaningful God could have done to prove how precious and extraordinary you are to Him than for His very Spirit to take up residence inside of you. You are indwelt by God, Mama. Your value is in knowing how valuable you are to Him, proven by His Son's death on the cross and His Spirit freely placed in Your heart. You are home to the Holy Spirit!

DAY 3

HE NEVER LEAVES US

There are few things that sting more than rejection. We've all experienced it in its various forms. Maybe you've been rejected by a parent, someone you dated, or a close friend. Maybe you've been rejected after a dream job interview or by a group you desperately wanted to fit into. Maybe you're reading this as a mama whose child has launched and he or she has since broken relationship with you or denied the faith you worked tirelessly to impart. Maybe you've experienced rejection from your spouse.

None of us is immune to rejection.

For many years I worked as an adoption counselor. It was one of the greatest privileges of my life—being able to walk alongside women experiencing unplanned pregnancies as they made plans of permanency for their child and also supporting hopeful parents-to-be as their dreams of having a child became a reality.

Though adoption is biblical and beautiful, I'm not pretending it's all rainbows and Skittles®. The process is often painful and certainly far from perfect. I recall one particular birth mom considering adoption who had actually been placed for adoption herself when she was a baby. She was struggling with her decision because she said that no matter how wanted she was by the loving parents who adopted her, and no matter how many times she was told how much her birth parents loved her, she always carried a deep-seated sense of rejection because she was placed for adoption.

Fast-forward several years later when God completely redeemed her story, reunited her with her birth parents, and revealed to her how deeply wanted and loved she truly was. She finally saw God's hand of grace on her life every single step of the way and came to the place where she could honestly say she wouldn't have changed a thing. Nothing is wasted with God.

But more than fearing rejection from people, I think a lot of us fear rejection from our heavenly Father. I remember the painful nights I put the kids to bed and then curled up on the couch and recited all of the things I wished I'd done differently and all of ways my Father must have been disappointed in me. I feared God would

give up on me because I'd all but given up on ever attaining a perfection I actually thought was possible in those early years.

When have you feared rejection and abandonment by God?

What circumstances or behaviors brought that fear? Is this something you still fear now? Explain.

Do you know someone else who feared being abandoned by God? David, and for good reason.

THE PROMISE OF HIS PRESENCE

OPEN YOUR BIBLE and read 1 Samuel 10:9-11.

Fill in the blank:

When Samuel anointed Saul as the first king of Israel, verse 10 says, "The Spirit of God _____ him, and he prophesied among them."

Later, however, in 1 Samuel 16:14, God removed the presence and power of the Holy Spirit from Saul when he disobeyed God. Without the power of the Spirit, Saul couldn't successfully serve as king, and he ultimately died in battle. After God removed His Spirit from Saul, God chose David as the second king of Israel.

Read 1 Samuel 16:13.

Fill in the blank:

When Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed David in the presence of his brothers, verse 13 says, "the Spirit of the LORD _____ David."

In both anointings we see the word “upon,” and that matters greatly.

David, who was often called the ideal king, has a remarkable story. From slaying Goliath to taking the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem, David served God faithfully in the power of Spirit, but like us, David was terribly human, and therefore, inherently fallible. Two such examples of his humanity are his adultery with Bathsheba and his orchestration of her husband’s murder.

After the prophet Nathan confronted him, David penned Psalm 51.

OPEN YOUR BIBLE and read David’s prayer in Psalm 51.

What did David beg God not to do? (See vv. 10-12.)

As we began to discuss in Day 2, in the Old Testament the Holy Spirit came upon people to equip and empower them for a specific purpose, but they couldn’t count on His presence as permanent. This means God could’ve taken the Holy Spirit from David like He did from Saul, but He didn’t. He was merciful in David’s humble confession and repentance and let His Spirit remain. Allowing the Holy Spirit to remain on David didn’t mean God protected him from the very painful consequences of his sin.

Like David, we will often suffer the consequences of our sin in human relationships, but unlike David, we never have to fear the ultimate consequence of losing the permanent presence of the Holy Spirit.

The profound difference between God’s people in the Old Testament and us now is that we have the precious post-Pentecost promise we receive as believers. We never have to fear abandonment by the Holy Spirit. We never have to fear God will take His Spirit from us. He is with us—and in our hearts—forever.

In Day 2 we read John 14:15-17 and highlighted two takeaways from that passage. Today, let’s continue to verse 18.

OPEN YOUR BIBLE and reread John 14:15-17, and this time read through verse 18.

In verse 16, Jesus said the Holy Spirit will be with us _____.

In verse 18, Jesus said He will not leave us as _____.

The Holy Spirit is the most faithful companion you and I will ever have. Quite literally, because of Jesus' promises, He is incapable of ever leaving us alone.

Growing up, I knew so little about the Holy Spirit's companionship. I knew Him mostly as a Convictor (a great gift we will unpack later), but I didn't think of Him as my Companion or my Comforter. I didn't know Him as my best friend.

However, this is the beautiful truth about the Spirit of God: His companionship isn't confined to our awareness of His presence. He stays when we pay Him no attention. He doesn't pout and walk out when we neglect Him. He remains even when we try to push Him away. We can forfeit the benefits of the anointing on our lives, but we can't force Him to give up on us.

OPEN YOUR BIBLE and read Psalm 139:7-10.

*What does this passage tell you about the Holy Spirit's presence?
Does that bring you comfort or make you uncomfortable? Why?*

How does knowing the Spirit is always with you encourage you in your parenting today?

I might not know what valleys you're walking through currently or what you've come through, but I do know there are no circumstances that can cause the Holy Spirit to leave you behind. He doesn't give up on you when you give up on yourself. The Holy Spirit doesn't abandon you when you stumble into sin. Your sadness doesn't scare Him away. His abiding presence is internal and eternal. He is the faithful friend you long for, taking your hand and leading you toward your hope of wholeness. He is the loyal companion who comforts you in your grief and distress. And He is nearer than your own breath in the midst of your fears and loneliness.

HOW DOES THIS EMPOWER MY PARENTING?

Something we don't hear much about is how lonely motherhood can be. It may even seem silly to say moms get lonely because, in many respects, we are never alone! Right? In fact, we'll do almost anything to get some alone time. We'll hide in the bathroom or sit in our car long after we've pulled into the driveway just for a little solitude. But the truth is, motherhood can be terribly lonely, even when we're surrounded by children.

You might feel lonely because ...

- You don't have the energy to invest in friendships because you have given everything you've got to your kids and there aren't any leftovers for girlfriends.
- You are single or divorced and literally doing it alone.
- You are disconnected from your spouse—a result of exhaustion, disagreeing about how to parent your children, or from any attempt at intimacy being interrupted by little ones who will do anything to delay saying goodnight.
- You don't have friends you can trust to talk about the hardships in your home. When the kids are little, we're afraid to be honest about how overwhelming parenting littles is because we think it makes us look like incompetent moms, or even bad moms. When our littles turn into teens, we're afraid to be honest about the struggles our kids are having or the choices they're making because we're afraid it makes them look like incompetent kids, or even bad kids.
- It looks like life is passing you by. While you change diapers, try to help with math homework that now feels above your pay grade, or cart children from activity to activity, you might feel like everyone else is making their dreams come true while you're just trying to decide what to make for dinner.

The majority of what we do as mothers is done in isolation, and so much of what we do feels invisible. Because while we're making sure everyone else is OK, it feels like there's nobody under our roof making sure we are OK.

You can know you are deeply loved but still feel terribly lonely.

Which of the statements about loneliness resonates most with you?

What other factors contribute to your loneliness?

What have you done in times of loneliness to feel less alone?
Was that helpful?

What I want you to know is that you are not alone in your loneliness. Did you know that loneliness is being called the new epidemic in America? Mamas aren't the exception to this research. Sometimes there's power in just knowing we're not the only ones who feel that way.

More importantly, the beautiful benefit of having the Holy Spirit is that we really are never alone. The One who remains with us doesn't need anything from us. His goal is to draw us deeper into intimacy with Jesus—and as a result, God gives us everything we need to parent the children He has entrusted to us. Imagine the Spirit not just taking up residence inside you but also feeling His companionship beside you and His power upon you!

Close today by reading Psalm 46. Go back and note the breathtaking truth in verse 5 and then write it below.

Sister, just as God was within His city and would not let it be destroyed, God is within you by His Spirit and He will not leave you or let you fall.

DAY 4

HE MAKES MUCH OF JESUS

If you asked me what some of my favorite things about the Holy Spirit are, what we are studying today would be one of the first—if not the first—things I'd name.

OPEN YOUR BIBLE and read the words of Jesus in John 16:13-15.

In this passage, Jesus was preparing His disciples for His ascension and teaching them about the coming work of the Holy Spirit.

What are some of the things that jump out at you?

Now look specifically at verse 14. Who did Jesus say the Holy Spirit would glorify?

The word “glorify” is the Greek word *doxazō*, which can be translated a variety of ways depending on its context. It can be rendered “to praise, extol, magnify, celebrate” or “to render (or esteem) glorious.”⁵ In John 16:14, *doxazō* actually encompasses the full range of these meanings.

Jesus was teaching that the Holy Spirit's whole goal is to glorify Him. In everything the Holy Spirit does, He wants Jesus to be the One whom we make much of.

When Jesus said, “He will guide you into all truth” (v. 13), He was telling the disciples that the Holy Spirit would help them recall and retell the truth about who Jesus is and what Jesus accomplished. And we are the vessels through which He does this today for our children. How incredible is that?

Can I confess something to you? I didn't appreciate the significance of this until I began to study the Spirit in depth. This central role of the Holy Spirit is one of the

most overlooked benefits, but this shouldn't surprise us, because we have a very real enemy who does not want us discovering the matchless love of Jesus. And He doesn't want our lives making much of Jesus with our kids.

The enemy's highest priority is to keep us from receiving salvation through Christ. There is nothing the "roaring lion" (1 Pet. 5:8) wants more than to keep you and me from inheriting the eternal blessings we receive in Christ. But, oh, once he loses that battle, he does not quit. He doubles down.

THE SCHEMES OF THE ENEMY

Once we are new creations in Christ, I believe the enemy's highest priority becomes ensuring we don't experience the freedom and fullness of God through the power of the Holy Spirit in this life (John 10:10).

He schemes by attaching stigmas to the Spirit that make us skeptical about what the Holy Spirit will do in us if we give Him full access.

What lies have made us keep the Spirit at arm's length? Put a checkmark by any of the ones that have ever resonated with you.

- I don't need the Holy Spirit because I have Jesus.
- The Holy Spirit is only for super-spiritual people.
- The Holy Spirit is only for super-strange people.
- The power of the Holy Spirit isn't for us today. It was only for "back then."
- The Holy Spirit doesn't serve a purpose in my life.
- The Holy Spirit is superfluous to my faith.
- The Holy Spirit is only for people who want to exercise spiritual gifts.
- I wouldn't know what to do with the Holy Spirit.

What else would you add?

These are all very common misconceptions about the Holy Spirit that are perpetuated by the enemy. The enemy knows that if we get to know the wonderful friend and companion we have in the Spirit, He will enlarge our hearts for Jesus. He will make Jesus more and more irresistible to us.

He does this by awakening our minds and hearts to what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross. The significance of Christ's sacrifice becomes very real to us when—and only when—the Spirit enlightens the eyes of our hearts to see it. But it goes beyond seeing it. The Spirit makes us bask in the beauty of Christ's love.

THE SPIRIT IS THE DIFFERENCE

Reflect on seasons in your life when your faith has felt dull and dry. Now reflect on times when it has felt alive and flourishing. Can you identify how the Spirit's presence and power made the difference?

Maybe you didn't even realize at the time that the Holy Spirit was the difference maker. That has been one of the sweetest gifts in writing this study—reflecting on and recognizing, oftentimes for the first time, where the Spirit was at work even when I didn't know it.

A life void of the Spirit's active presence and power falls so far short of the dynamic life we were made to experience in Christ. It also doesn't draw others to the gospel because they don't see anything in us that they don't already possess or want.

OPEN YOUR BIBLE and read Ephesians 1:15-23.

In verses 17-19 specifically, Paul prayed that the Father would give us the Spirit, that our hearts might be enlightened, so we will know three things. List them below:

If we neglect the Spirit, who wants to empower us to experience the glory of Jesus, we will settle for:

- A faith frustrated by discontentment;
- Rote religion and stale sentiments; and
- Knowing what we're supposed to believe about Jesus but never experiencing the intimacy of His love.

1.

2.

3.

Do you know the hope to which He has called you? This is the assurance of eternal life guaranteed by your possession of the Holy Spirit.

Do you know the richness of your inheritance? This is the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us (Eph. 2:6-7)!

Do you know the immeasurable greatness of His power toward you? This is the same extraordinary supernatural power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead!

This is the good stuff the enemy is determined to make us miss out on. The question we have to answer is, *Will I let him win or am I all in?*

WHERE DO WE SHINE THE SPOTLIGHT?

Just as the Holy Spirit's goal is to put the spotlight on Jesus, it's the Holy Spirit in us that makes us want to take the spotlight off ourselves and shine it on Jesus.

The Holy Spirit protects us from wanting glory and honor that belongs to Jesus. A woman who is led by the Spirit is a woman whose life makes much of Jesus. She will not hoard the glory. It will go where it belongs: the name above every other name.

Name a few women or men whose lives glorify Jesus.

What specific things do they do or what traits do they possess that make you more captivated by the greatness of God rather than the greatness of them?

A self-glorifying life is a warning sign that we lack the activity of the Holy Spirit. And a Jesus-glorifying life is a good sign of the Spirit's activity.

But now I want us to think about this as it relates to motherhood.

See, I want my life to be a love song for Jesus. I want my life to testify to the incomparable love of Jesus so that my children will find Him to be irresistible. I bet you do too. But here's the relief. We don't make our lives a love song. The Holy Spirit does. The larger we allow Him to become in our lives, the more beautiful the melody will be.

I think we mamas are good at feeling like we have to be our child's savior and holy spirit. We put so much pressure on ourselves to be who only Jesus can be for our kids and to do what only the Spirit can do in their lives. But the Holy Spirit in us empowers us to turn the spotlight on Jesus, the only One who will never fail them and will always be faithful to uphold His promises to them.

The Holy Spirit's primary purpose is to reveal the glory of Jesus through you, but don't let the devil fool you into thinking this can only happen through your "perfect parenting" or "good days."

We can ask the Holy Spirit to make our lives point to Jesus' perfection when our kids take the brunt of our imperfection, and we can believe He will do it. We can call on the Holy Spirit to make our lives testify to the selfless love of Jesus when our kids encounter our selfishness, and we can believe He will do it. This is what He delights to do.

In what areas do you feel like you fail your children or fall short as a mom?

How can your shortcomings testify to Jesus' perfection?

How can your unrighteousness bring glory to the righteousness of Christ that covers us?

Pause and reflect on where you want to ask the Holy Spirit to shine the spotlight on Jesus through your weaknesses and shortcomings.

Jesus taught His disciples this principle in John 15:26-27. **OPEN YOUR BIBLE** and read those verses now.

What did Jesus say the Holy Spirit will do? And what did Jesus say we must also do?



HOW DOES THIS EMPOWER MY PARENTING?

Jesus affirmed that the ultimate aim of the Holy Spirit is to point people to Him. To testify to who He is and what He accomplished. And then He affirmed how we are to partner with Him in that work: we must testify about Him.

Do you want your life to point your children to His goodness? Good grief, I do! I want it more than anything else, and I bet you do too.

We no longer have to be weighed down by the reality of our weakness or ashamed of the ways in which we fall short at being our child's savior. We were never meant to play that role, and we were never meant to receive that glory. The glory belongs to Him alone.

Let's ask the Holy Spirit together to make His aim our aim. Let's ask Him to lead us into deeper dependency on and intimacy with Jesus. And then let's thank Him again for this glorious reality: The assurance we have in Jesus and the affection we feel for Jesus is produced by the Holy Spirit. Is there any better gift?