

The Dependent Church: Growing in the Spirit

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[0 : 00] As Neil's outlined, God calls us on a big mission to share the good news of the gospel to all people, our friends, family, colleagues, neighbors. But in order for us to do this, to live on the gospel and to honor God's mission for evangelism, we must be wholly dependent on Him.

Dan and Simon will speak about faith and prayer in a moment, but I will first talk about the Holy Spirit. And over the next 20 or so minutes, I'll try to address the two questions that we have just discussed, plus a third question as well.

First, let's take a walk down memory lane. Let's remind ourselves, who is the Holy Spirit? What do we know about the Holy Spirit? There's a saying in some Christian circles that the Holy Spirit is the forgotten member of the Trinity.

We believe in and we pray to Father God. We love, trust, and receive the grace of Jesus Christ. But maybe we don't acknowledge or understand the person of the Holy Spirit as much.

Well, let's go back to basics. Who is the Holy Spirit? Number one, the Holy Spirit is a person of the Trinity, equal in stature, in glory, in sovereignty, in honor, as the Father, God the Father, as Jesus Christ, God the Son.

[1 : 20] And the Holy Spirit's fingerprints are seen throughout Scripture. Genesis 1, verse 2. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, was hovering over the face of the waters.

At creation, the Holy Spirit was there, was present, creating order out of chaos. And throughout the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit empowered many imperfect men and women to do supernatural, powerful things for God.

In the New Testament, Jesus was miraculously conceived by the Holy Spirit. At His baptism, the Holy Spirit descended on Christ like a dove.

And throughout His ministry, the Holy Spirit was there with Jesus, empowering Him as His helper and companion to heal the sick, to preach with boldness, to cast out demons, and even raise the dead.

The Spirit was there when Christ went to the cross. And it was the power of the Holy Spirit which raised Christ from the dead and seated Him in the heavenly places, Ephesians 1.20. And in the early church, in Acts chapter 2, which Kevin spoke about last Sunday, the followers of Jesus were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in different tongues.

[2 : 39] This is the point. Throughout Scripture, the Holy Spirit was there, creating order out of chaos, filling God's people with superhuman, unimaginable power.

And the Spirit was there as the helper of Jesus Christ. And when Jesus went into heaven, when He ascended into heaven, Jesus gave the church, that's us, that includes Watermark, the Holy Spirit as our helper to be with us always.

So today, if you are a follower of Jesus, and the Holy Spirit dwells or lives in you, Romans 8.9, You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.

If in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you, anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him. Ephesians 1.13, When you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

Let me say it again. If you are a Christian, if you are a follower of Christ, the Holy Spirit lives in you, and therefore, His power is available to you. Ephesians 3.16, According to the riches of His glory, may He grant you to be strengthened with power in your inner being.

[3 : 58] The Holy Spirit lives in you, and His power is available to you. So, going to our first question, which we've been discussing, why do we need to depend on the Holy Spirit and His power to live life as a Christian?

Can't we just read the Bible, go to CG, go to Sunday service? Why do we need to be strengthened with the Spirit's power? Well, at Watermark, we often say that we need the gospel to go from our heads into our hearts.

Of course, this doesn't mean that we switch off our brains and we only care about feelings and emotions. Far from it. One hundred percent, we need to study the Word of God, understand sound doctrine, and put it into practice.

But maybe you can relate to this. Do you sometimes feel that your relationship with God is a bit dry or lifeless? You read God's Word, you go to church, but God's love is not really real in your life, in your heart.

Or do you struggle to apply the gospel in everyday life, especially when life throws you a curveball? A relationship breaks down, your career takes a hit. You know God's Word says trust Him, but in that moment, you find yourself doubting.

[5 : 08] Or do you find yourself unable to tackle the sin in your life? You know that sin destroys, that's what God's Word says, but you can't control your thoughts or your actions.

You know Christ's calling is higher, but on the scoreboard, sin is winning. Can anyone relate to this? Or is it just me that experiences these things? See, on our own strength, the day-to-day Christian life can be difficult, perhaps even impossible.

It's difficult to live out the gospel in everyday life. But the wonderful news, dear brothers and sisters, in Christ, is that by His grace and kindness, God has given all of us a helper, the Holy Spirit.

He's been given to you to be with you forever, John 14. And by His power, the Holy Spirit enlightens the eyes of our hearts to see the beauty of Christ.

It makes the gospel come alive. The Holy Spirit opens the eyes of our hearts to see the beauty of Christ. the Holy Spirit causes us to be rooted and grounded in the love of Christ and to understand the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ's undying love.

[6 : 16] In short, the Holy Spirit glorifies and magnifies Christ in our hearts. John 16, 14. When the Spirit of truth comes, the Holy Spirit, He will guide you into all truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears, He will speak.

He will glorify me. This is not just knowledge of Christ. It's not just theology. It's also a revelation in our hearts.

It's doctrine and it's power. The Spirit magnifies Jesus up here and also down here in our hearts. And so we need the Spirit to live the gospel in everyday life.

Here's the second reason which means was speaking of us why we need the Spirit in our lives, why we depend on the Spirit. As Neil mentioned, it's a really difficult mission that we have to evangelize, to share the gospel with people.

It's mission impossible, you could say. In our own strength, with our own words. How are we supposed to convince someone to follow Jesus? We need to depend on the Spirit's power.

[7 : 22] It is a person of the Holy Spirit who strengthens us with power to have the courage to even approach someone. It's the Spirit of Christ who gives us the words to say to our friend when we're sharing the gospel.

And it's the Holy Spirit who's the one who actually transforms someone's heart, opens the eyes of that person's heart to have saving faith in Christ. And so we desperately need to depend on the Holy Spirit to empower us to live out the gospel with joy and fullness and also to live out the calling for mission.

So now our second question. What are the markers of a Spirit-dependent life? Kev described what a Spirit-filled church looks like last Sunday. If you missed his sermon, go back online and listen to it. But today I'll try to give a few examples and illustrations of what a Spirit-dependent person or life looks like. Four things. Number one, it looks like someone who has an active prayer life.

Simon will talk about prayer in a moment, but just briefly, someone who is dependent on the Holy Spirit, whenever they face a challenge, their first reaction is not, how do I fix this or what should I do?

[8 : 33] Their first reaction is prayer. Seek God. Seek God's discernment. Seek God's guidance and seek His healing. I think Sherman Wong is someone who lives by this.

Sherman, where are you? Sherman Wong? Learn about prayer? Go to Sherman Wong. Whatever challenge comes her way, a family matter or a church administrative matter, i.e. the venue search, Sherman's first reaction isn't, let's strategize, let's do this, let's do this.

Her first reaction is, prayer, prayer, prayer. Let's seek God in prayer. Speaking of prayer, through prayer, the Holy Spirit heals in supernatural ways.

I'll share my own testimony about this. When I was 14 years old, I had a really terrible tennis injury in my right arm. And one day, I was home with my mother and brother and they both prayed for me. My brother was nine years old at the time. The prayer was simple, one minute. But as all our eyes were closed and we said amen, my arm shook. And then we're all wondering, what was that?

[9 : 36] Oscar, was that you? Was that you, Justin? Was that you, Mom? Who shook Oscar's arm? It wasn't any of us. The Holy Spirit healed my arm. I am a thousand percent positive about that. By His grace and mercy, I don't even know why.

The Holy Spirit healed me that day. Being home with me dependent means having an active prayer life in everything and anything, big and small, because God's Spirit works powerfully through prayer.

Number two, looks like someone who is growing in the fruits of the Spirit. CK mentioned this just now. Good job, CK. Well done. The fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

These are collective baskets of fruit. They're not just, we don't just have one of these fruits. God calls us to have all of them. And so someone who is dependent on the Spirit is growing in the fruits of the Spirit in all of them.

And this is very apparent in how we relate to each other. When relational tension comes our way, which it always does, and we are, naturally, we want to fight back.

[10 : 40] Instead of defensiveness and aggression, we think the best of others. Instead of biting back, we show grace. Where's my wife, Celeste? I want to talk about her right now. Nice.

Don't try to hide. I'm talking about you right now. If you know my wife, Celeste, you know that she's naturally very intelligent, but also very... What's the word? Forthright?

Blunt? CK knows. You can ask CK. If you ask her her view on something, she'll tell you as it is. She doesn't mince words. Celeste and I have been married for 10 plus years. Sorry, 9 plus years.

Almost 10. Did I write? And I dare say I have the best marriage of anyone I know. But we still fight. We still have conflict. But over the years, as I've seen God's spirit work in Celeste's heart, as her love of Christ has grown, I've seen a softening of her heart.

When we have conflict, which we do often, instead of her holding bitterness and resentment towards me, when I have hurt her with my words or actions, I see a softening, I see a kindness, I see a grace, I see forgiveness.

[11 : 48] You see, those who are growing in Christ and growing by the Spirit are marked by healthy relationships that are not conflict-free, but conflicts are resolved quickly through the Spirit's fruit, patience, kindness, gentleness, among others.

Let's be a people of God that depend on the Spirit to grow in the fruits of the Spirit. Number three, looks like someone who regularly confesses, repents, and turns away from sin.

John 16, 8, when He, the Holy Spirit, comes, He will convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The Holy Spirit is the one who causes us to be acutely aware of our sin and depravity, who convicts us and causes us to turn away from sin.

And so, if we're living by the Spirit and dependent on the Spirit, confession and repentance doesn't just happen once every six months. It's a regular occurrence. It happens all the time. And the Holy Spirit doesn't just convict us of sin.

He reorients our hearts to love Christ more and to hate that sin. And even those secret, shameful sins are no longer there, no longer there in our hearts anymore.

[12 : 56] Some of you know that I used to play high-stakes poker. I used to play in underground clubs. This is many, many years ago. Not recently. Underground clubs.

I used to play in Macau, etc. I was addicted to poker. It wasn't just a pastime. It was an addiction and it was sin. But in my own life, as I have, I guess, followed Christ more and loved Him more and the Spirit worked in me, you probably know this as well, I don't have any interest in that anymore at all.

I don't have any desire even or interest in high-stakes poker. Desire is gone. Being dependent on the Holy Spirit means we actively repent and turn away from sin.

And fourth and final, it looks like someone who actively shares their faith with those that don't yet know Jesus. As Neal discussed, it's difficult to share the gospel.

No question about it. The outcome is highly uncertain. Maybe our friend will think that we're wacky. Maybe we'll have that discussion and share our faith and our friend will disagree and we'll be disappointed or embarrassed.

[14 : 05] But if we are a people who are dependent on the Holy Spirit, we can be free and bold in sharing our faith because it's the Spirit who gives us the courage.

It's the Spirit who gives us the very words to say. And it's the Holy Spirit who is the one who controls that outcome and impacts and illuminates that person's heart.

I think Jeremy Power is someone who depends on the Spirit to share his faith. Sorry, Jeremy, I'm going to embarrass you wherever you are. Jeremy has been asking God and His Spirit to give him more opportunities to share his faith in Jesus.

And guess what happened? Jeremy was with his friend. I won't mention him, but Jeremy was with his friend who he sort of works with and Jeremy was hanging out with his friend and they were, I think, in a taxi on the way home and Jeremy felt the Spirit prompting him to invite his friend to church for his baptism.

And guess what? That friend came to church. That friend still comes to Watermark. Even now, let's pray for Jeremy's friend to know the saving love of Christ. So what does it look like to be dependent on the Holy Spirit?

[15 : 17] It looks like someone who is active in prayer. It looks like someone who is growing in the fruits of the Spirit. It's someone who continually repents and turns away from sin. And number four, it looks like someone who is actively sharing the gospel.

Don't we want to be a people like this? Do we? Don't we want to depend on the Spirit's power to do all these things for God's glory? Haven't we read of so many heroes of the faith who are regular people, ordinary people, empowered by an extraordinary, supernatural God and Holy Spirit?

So how do we become? Third question. How do we become a people that depend on the Holy Spirit? I'm sure there are many, many ways. Here are three suggestions.

Number one, surrender, surrender, surrender. We all hate uncertainty. We all hate losing control. We're hardwired to reach for control and grab onto it.

But we cannot hold onto control and still say that we want to depend on the Holy Spirit. It doesn't work. If we are to be a people who truly depend on God's Spirit, we need to surrender everything.

[16 : 32] Not just one little inch of our heart. We need to give God our whole heart. Especially, we have to lose our grip on those things that we love most. Our money, our relationships, our kids' future, our comfort, our pleasure.

May our prayer be, Lord, not my will, but yours be done. And may our prayer be, if it is your will, Lord, I will follow you. I will do this or that. Surrender, surrender, surrender.

Number two, pray for the Spirit's power. How can the gospel get into our hearts if we don't pray for it? Get on our knees. Let's petition God and His Spirit to open the eyes of our hearts to see our sin and see the beauty of Christ.

Let's also pray with faith every day in daily life and daily circumstances for the Spirit's power. When someone hurts you and you're tempted to bite back in that moment, Holy Spirit, please, help me to hold my tongue.

When your kids are driving you crazy and you want to just explode, anyone been there? Just me, okay, just me. Spirit, please give me the patience and gentleness to love my children well right now.

[17 : 48] When you're with a non-Christian friend and you're thinking, maybe God is calling me to share my faith, but I really don't want to because I'm freaked out. Pray, God, please, by your Spirit, give me the courage, give me the boldness, give me the faith, give me the words to say, to share your love to my friend because they desperately need to know who you are.

You see, the Spirit works in supernatural physical ways as I have shared with my arm, but the Spirit equally works in supernatural heart ways, transforming the human heart to become more like Christ as we depend on Him.

And third, be sensitive to the Spirit's leading. The Holy Spirit is our helper, John 14. He gives us godly discernment, He speaks to us, sometimes in a clear voice, sometimes in a prompting or a sense.

Many of you know that I left the corporate finance world about a year ago where I was there for 20 plus years. At first, I was pushed out, but then when I actually got another job to go back, I rejected that job.

You may wonder, how does someone in high finance suddenly leave his career behind at such a young age? I am young. I am young. I'm too young to retire.

[19 : 04] I'll never retire. It's been a journey of walking with God for me. Daily praying of prayer, of surrender for my career, for my work, Lord. I want to give it to you. Please, God, how do I honor you with my work?

Whatever that means. If you want me to stay in finance, I'll stay. If you want me to go and do something else, Lord, I will follow you. Make your plan known to me, Lord. Spirit, guide me. These have been my prayers over actually many years.

And so the time came to make that decision. as I continued to pray, I felt the Spirit leading me not to go back. I wanted to honor God and I wanted to obey the Spirit and it was very clear to me.

I lost the desire to go back into that field. Okay. So, how do we become a people dependent on the Holy Spirit? I have three suggestions.

Surrender, surrender, surrender. pray for the Spirit's power and be sensitive to the Spirit's leading.

So, to close, if we are to truly be a people who experience the love of Christ, if we are to be a people who truly love Christ deeply and if we are to honor God in His mission to share the gospel, we must, we must, we must be wholly dependent on God's Spirit for His power so that we can do all things for the glory of God.

[20 : 27] There's one personal reflection there that I wrote in your sheet. How can we grow? How can we grow? How can you, in particular, grow in dependence on the Holy Spirit?

What specific action do you think God is calling you to do to grow in your dependence on the Spirit?

Let's just spend the next five or so minutes individually doing some personal reflection, perhaps prayer as well and then I'll pass it on to, I think, Cyberdem to speak on faithness.

Thank you.