Week of September 8: HOLY SPIRIT

John 14:26 (NLT)

But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative – that is, the Holy Spirit – he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.

DAY 1: Waiting on the Holy Spirit

Imagine for a minute a cloudy sky. Not dark, not stormy, just as far as you can see, thick, grey cloud coverage. Now, it's been like this for a while, more than days, maybe even weeks.

Yet you still look out and up, searching for a small break in the endless sky of clouds.

And then it happens.....

The grey thins, turns to white, and all of a sudden there is a small circle of the most beautiful blue.

That small circle of blue stirs inside of you like a promise –

there will be more to come –
so, you keep looking you keep searching you turn your face to the sky and there –

finally –

far on the horizon is the break you've been waiting for. That small circle of blue, surrounded by endless grey and puffy white, somehow changes something inside of you, your hope is renewed, and you believe wholeheartedly that that clear blue horizon is coming;

that flickering glimpse is often what it is to hear the Holy Spirit.

The waiting: Psalm 130:5-8 (NIV)

I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.
I wait for the LORD
more than watchmen wait for the morning,
more than watchmen wait for the morning.
Israel, put your hope in the LORD,

for with the LORD is unfailing love

and with him is full redemption. He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.

It's really hard to wait, and frankly, we are not good at it. This sort of waiting isn't one of patience, though that is required, but rather, it is one of ANTICIPATION. It is the **continuous abiding** in the Now, and the Not Yet....The Was, and Is, and Is To Come.

We're not good at the waiting because we want what we want now. For good or for bad we are living in a time and in a place that is constantly telling us we can have whatever we want, whenever we want it. And not just that, <u>but that we deserve it</u>; easy as that.

We know deep within our hearts that this is not true, but we love the idea; the entire western world is built on this theory.

On top of that, we seriously suck at silence.

We have been conditioned to receive the noise.

Our phones, our Tv, the radio, even a lot of the lighting we are surrounded by is loud. What about when we get together? Do we talk just to talk; and what do our words honour?

We hustle, we work, we strive, we do.....and, when that doesn't reap the desired outcome, we throw our hands up in failure.....

But the Lord working through the Holy Spirit doesn't "work" that way.

We need to quiet our minds.

We need to be still.

We need to wait.

When was the last time you stopped?

Unplugged?

Sat still?

Got out of town to walk in the wilderness; without headphones?

When did you last wait for the LORD to speak to you? Not just you telling Him the way it should be.

Do you know the way into this listening?

Look at what JESUS says in John 14:25-27 (NIV):

"All this **I** have spoken while still with you. But the **Advocate**, the **Holy Spirit**, whom the **Father** will send in my name,

will teach you all things

and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.

I do not give you as the world gives.

Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

This listening has something to do with Peace.

It has something to do with not listening to what the world says you deserve, but rather to grab hold of Him – Jesus – who came from the Father, and, when it was time for Jesus to return to the Father, He left us His Spirit, so we would not be without Counsel – The Advocate – living and breathing inside of us.

Challenge/Reflection:

- 1. Reflect on Psalm 130:5-8 and John 14:23-31
- 2. Challenge ~ 3 separate times throughout your day stop. **Stop.** Close your eyes. Tell the Holy Spirit that you are there; for Him. Be still. Be silent. Start for 1 Minute, and if that's not making you want to crawl out of your skin, try to increase it. But be in that time for Him, the Holy Spirit.
- ~When you pray, open your hands. This is twofold symbolism. First, you are recognizing that you hold nothing outside of what the Lord brings to you; your hands are empty and only He can fill them.

Second, you are trusting the Promise that every good and perfect gift comes from above, comes from the Father, James 1:17

~don't be discouraged. This takes practice; that <u>continuous abiding</u>! The Holy Spirit sounds different to everybody and often different from visit to visit. Be encouraged because the Spirit is always with you, you just have to learn what He sounds like to you....<u>and that takes time spent with the Lord</u>.

DAY 2: Confession

We haven't always got it right when it comes to our best efforts at understanding the Holy Spirit, and there are many, many ways we have certainly got it incredibly wrong.

For instance: the mythical.

Mystery, YES!

Mythical, no.

You know what I'm talking about....the Wind of the Spirit?

This whole concept has been highjacked by mystics, and the new age movement.

But I digress, we want to look at Who the Holy Spirit Is and how to move forward with the Spirit, not necessarily how we have stumbled in the past. So, perhaps, the best place to begin is to confess.

PRAYER:

Father God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, the Perfect Trinity. We confess, both corporately and individually, that we have wanted to put You, Holy Spirit, into a box that makes sense to us. We confess that we have turned the idea of You into something uncertain, potentially frightening, and often at odds with Truth.

We confess that we have wanted "vending-machine-faith" - we put a small amount in, and get the answers and benefits at minimal cost, walking away until the next time we need something.

We confess we don't do well with the unknown.

We confess we want to grab hold of control, and with You, we know the idea of us having control is an illusion.

As we approach Your Throne, help us to have open hands and a posture that is willing to receive what You offer us; that being - YOU.

We stand before You, humbled, eager to understand, and hungry to hear Your Voice, feel Your Love, around and flowing through us.

Thank you, Father, for, making a way for us to approach you through the Sacrifice Jesus made through His Blood, and thank you that through Him we have the Holy Spirit – the Counselor, the Advocate - living inside of us.

Yes, inside of us!

What a precious gift.

We love You and All You Are, Holy Father, Holy Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.

We also have the tendency to rest in guilt.

Now what could this mean?

Well, we could feel guilt for not understanding. And the way to understand would be to pray more, and that doesn't mean the talking type of prayer; the rattling off of lists; it means the listening.

The being still.

Waiting.

Waiting to hear that still small voice whisper to us, "I Am Here".

That's first-person language.

"I AM HERE," says the Lord.

We know Jesus sent the Holy Spirit, and He said specifically it was good that He go back to the Father so that the Holy Spirit could be with us, specifically IN US, so we could HEAR HIM – Jesus and the Father; take a look:

<u>"But very truly I tell you</u>, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you." - John 16:7-15 (NIV)

Every time Jesus says the words, "Very Truly I tell you", or, in many other translations; "I tell you the Truth", He is about to say something very important. With this in mind, go back and read that passage again.

Reflection:

1. Take a moment to quiet your heart. If you feel prompted to revisit any of the areas we confessed in our earlier prayer, do that now.

If not, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you any area of doubt or fear you may have regarding the Holy Spirit

Remember, the closer you draw to Him, the closer, and more easily, your relationship with Him grows. (James 4:7-10)

DAY 3: Mystery

7 is a number that is used frequently throughout the Word of the Lord. It can be as simple as the days of the week, or as research inducing as trying to understand the seven stars held in the palm of His Right Hand in Revelation 1:16 But the reference to 7 is never a passing detail. It has purpose, and there is wealth to be discovered when mined.

The 7 stars in His Right Hand in Revelation refers to the Holy Spirit, in sevenfold manifestation.

A bit tricky?

Here's what it says about this in Isaiah 11:2 (NIV)

"The <u>Spirit of the LORD</u> will rest on him—
the <u>Spirit of wisdom</u> and of <u>understanding</u>,
the Spirit of <u>counsel</u> and of <u>power</u>,
the Spirit of <u>knowledge</u> and of the <u>fear of the LORD</u>."

'<u>Got Questions'</u> explains it like this: The prophecy is that the Messiah would be empowered not by seven individual spirits but by the <u>One Spirit</u>, <u>described</u> <u>seven ways</u>:

- 1) The Spirit of the LORD
- 2) The Spirit of wisdom
- 3) The Spirit of understanding
- 4) The Spirit of counsel
- 5) The Spirit of power
- 6) The Spirit of knowledge
- 7) The Spirit of the fear of the Lord

Proverbs 1:2-7 (NIV) explains it like this:

for gaining wisdom and instruction:
for understanding words of insight;
for receiving instruction in prudent behavior,
doing what is right and just and fair;
for giving prudence to those who are simple,
knowledge and discretion to the young —
let the wise listen and add to their learning,
and let the discerning get guidance —
for understanding proverbs and parables,
the sayings and riddles of the wise.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,
But fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Not one of these Spirit-filled virtues are visible to the eye; ergo – a mystery, to some extent.

It is in the unseen where mystery lives; when we live with the idea of embracing the mystery, we embrace a greater precept of relying on Him.

Let's take a stab at simplifying this for a minute.

Have you ever had a moment in which you were moved to tears for reasons you cannot explain?

You hear a song, you see a scene in a movie/show, you hear someone say something that deeply and irrevocably affects you and spurs on change? (Not just a feeling, but a knowing or realizing).

That is potentially the work of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Have you ever been guided to something that you can say with out a doubt, "that must have been the LORD"?

Have you ever been stubbornly brought to your knees with knowing you need to address an issue, and apologize to a friend, for something that happened an age, like years and years ago?

That could be the Holy Spirit.

How can you be sure?

Time.

Focus.

That dreaded silence!

But not just silence; Silent Pursuit.

Essentially, PRACTICE.

Have you ever woken up in the night with a person on your mind? And the only reasonable response is to pray or them?

But it's not left to a feeling...it requires further reflection, seeking the Lord with the Spirit of Discernment to fully gain Understanding.....

Are you seeing 7-fold manifestation of the Spirit at work in hearing from the Lord?

How can you be sure?

Test it.

The Holy Spirit will never say anything that contradicts the Word.

How can you be sure?

Pray.

Ask someone to pray for and with you. They don't even need the details...the Spirit leads like that. The Spirit will give you the words to pray. He knows more than we do!

How can you be sure?

There in lives the mystery.

It's an obedience through trust.

An obedience through discipline.

An obedience by seeking the Lord in all you do.

That dreaded word PRACTICE.

I would add, <u>Pay Attention</u>, and through it all remain Humble, as you willingly, wholeheartedly, and Continuously Abide in the Lord.

Let's live in a newly embraced desire and commitment to pursue the Mystery of the Holy Spirit today!

Challenge:

Practice talking to the Holy Spirit.

Don't know where to start? Pray the Word.

Ask the Lord to give you the wisdom from Proverbs 2:2-7.

Ask Him questions, not just requests.

Then don't forget to sit with Him and listen.

DAY 4: Prophecy

We are not going to dive into the nitty gritty of prophecy. We are not even going to fully look at all occasions of prophecy throughout the Word.

How we are going to consider this topic, in reference to the Holy Spirit, is by knowing the Word, trusting it's Truth and that it IS TRUTH, and knowing how to check our understanding of the Holy Spirit speaking in our lives, and how it must always align with scripture, and never contradict what the Inspired Word of the Lord says.

The Holy Spirit cannot speak lies.

The Holy Spirit will never guide outside of the lines of Truth.

The Holy Spirit is One of Three – The Trinity – they are ONE and work as One.

Yesterday, we did a deeper dive into the mystery of the Holy Spirit and how we must practice, or draw closer to Him.

Prophecy can be researched and looked into all-the-live-long-day after day. But.

But if you are not living in deep relationship with the Lord, honouring Jesus with your life, and living to seek understanding through the Holy Spirit, all the prophecy in the Bible will potentially mean very little.

As Jesus followers, we are tasked to become more like Him.

Our purpose is always to draw closer to Him who puts breath in your lungs.

(Flip open the pages of your Bible and underline, or write in your journal, the key words of these passages.)

How about **Ephesians 6:10-18** (NIV)?

What are your key words and directives?

¹⁰ BE Strong... ¹¹ Put on... ¹³ Put on... ¹⁴ Stand firm... ¹⁶ take up... ¹⁷ Take... ¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

These are all verbs.

Action words.

We need to do something with all these tools we've been given. When we draw closer to God, we equip ourselves with all this Armour and move towards Him, and therefore, become more like Him, able to move out beyond ourselves, into the world He called us to share Him with.

How about **Galatians 5:22-26** (NIV)?

²² But <u>the fruit of the SPIRIT is</u> love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control.

Against such things there is no law.

24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

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

Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

These virtues, or **fruits**, infuse us with Him. Verse 25 directs us to *KEEP IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT*; we do this daily, by laying down our own crosses and following HIM, (Matthew 16:24-28).

I feel confident in saying, <u>on a daily basis</u>, the Prophetic Voice of the Holy Spirit has a low statistical probability of suddenly, and out of the blue, telling you to sell all your stuff, leave your people, and cross the ocean to an obscure location, where you don't know the language, and are told to eat only seaweed. This is the cliché we hear all the time....this is the cliché many fear.

It rarely starts there.

Keeping in step with the Spirit, does require something of you.

OBEDIENCE (that's an act of doing).

This may be obvious.

But obvious also doesn't mean same-old-same-old.

SURRENDER (also a commitment to doing).

Have you felt nudged to worship in a different way.

Felt the need to raise your hands but don't know how?

Have the prodding in your spirit to kneel?

Ask someone for forgiveness for a past offence?

Ask for help in knowing how to confess and keep accountable?

Ask someone for prayer?

Throughout the Bible, Old Testament and New, when His people wanted to hear from Him, when they wanted His presence to return, what did they do?

They fasted and prayed.

They did what they could to get closer to God.

NOTE: you don't fast or pray for you. It's not a token machine. You fast to humble yourself, submit and acknowledge His Sovereignty and Providence over your life.

It's a realigning of your hearts with Him.

REFLECTION:

Perhaps the first step today is to commit to a cycle of prayer and fasting. Ask the Lord what to pray for.

Ask the Lord to give you an idea of what your parameters of fasting might be. Fasting is abstaining from food, yes, but it can also be a break from social media or other distractions.

Read through the passages we looked at today and challenge yourself to spending more time with He Who Was, Who Is, and Is To Come.

DAY 5: Hope

There is a grandma and grandpa with a gaggle of grandchildren with butterfly nets and tadpole/frog scoops by the stream beyond the backyard fence this morning. They came prepared. Their backpacks are filled with empty jars and their faces are filled with the promise of all the delights they will unearth.

Grandma laughs when the squeals of discovery reach new heights of decibel pitch.

Grandpa bends down to help the little one scoop up the jumping treasure.

They all leap back as it jumps to get away, and disappears in the tall grasses.

They had success out there today as they searched for those slimy jumpers, even if it was short lived and slipped through their grasp.

Will they be back tomorrow?

Now that they've seen, nearly touched, will they continue the hunt?

Will they give up, thinking they'll never catch the prize, because it was there and then gone?

And what if they do, give up?

What then?

Have you ever witnessed the hope in a child's eyes fade, whether it was over a small frog or a lost...something?

We can chalk-up that fading hope as *life-lessons*.

A teachable moment.

Hard-knock life.

Growing up.

Them's the breaks.

We learn how to pass it off early, don't we?

Instead of disappointment we shrug, thinking, its not for me.

We wonder, did I do something to deserve this? Or, I'm not good enough, not smart enough, or _____.

That's not how HOPE in the Lord, or, for this instance, HOPING and waiting on the Holy Spirit works.

Romans 5:1-5 (NIV) says;

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

³Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings,

because we know that suffering produces ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not disappoint us,

because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has give us.

<u>justified through faith</u> = implies we can't earn it because it's already done. Jesus already did it for us; ²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

HOPE is intended to be a built-in part of our character in relationship to WHO HE IS.

⁵And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has give us.

Justification essentially means:

EFFORT = YES!

EARNING = NO!

You can't earn the frog in your net, but you can put in a lot of effort – or PERSEVERANCE – until you figure out how to get there.

Because we know that suffering produces ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope.

⁵And hope does not disappoint us,

because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has give us.

Perhaps this seems too simplified after the last few days. Maybe it's supposed to be.

Perseverance = character = a better character = grows hope.

Also, something of note; do you think those grandparents say no to those grandkids when they ask to go back out to hunt for creepy creatures? I say no, because they remember the delight at finding something tangible to chase. They grew young at heart and got in touch with the character in them that they had denied and turned aside.

But maybe most importantly; when someone special asks you to spend time with them, you don't want to say no; especially because grandparents know their time is short and opportunities dwindle.

When you ask the Lord to spend time with you; He loves you so much He gave us Jesus, who sent the Advocate – The Holy Spirit, He won't say no.

Also of note, those grandparents were out there all summer with those kids!

CHALLENGE:

Talk to the Lord today. Give Him your time. Wait on Him. Ask Him questions about Himself – WHO HE IS.

He wants you to know Him, so give it a go.

Again, don't be discouraged if it doesn't go the way you want it to go the first time.

PERSEVERE!

DAY 6: Discernment

"How do I know it was the Lord I was hearing?"

Great question.

This is a sorry/not-sorry sort of thing.

Each of us was created differently, yet in His Image.

Some of us have dark hair, some light.

Some of us have long or wide noses, some small and turned up at the tip.

Some of us have freckles, other have none.

Tall - short. Curvy - straight.

Some voices are deep, some are high, but loud; some soft, some boom.

Some love words, others numbers.

Visual learners, reading learners, linear thinkers, others are abstract and outside of the box.

We are all created differently, yet in His Image.

So, if we are all uniquely different, why would He talk to each of us the same? The answer?

He wouldn't.

Could it be that He speaks to us each individually in our own language?

Could it be that He loves us so much He speaks to each of us individually, in the language of our hearts or spirits? The heart/spirit He created in us to seek Him?

When we unpack His Voice through that lens, does it make you desire to pursue His Voice with greater zeal and devotion?

Yet, the question remains;

"How do I know it was the Lord I was hearing?"

We've looked at the how over the past few days. Essentially, spend time with the Lord, your Saviour!

PRACTICE.

Learn how to ask Him questions.

The basics of question asking are absolutely a great place to start.

WHO? - WHAT? - WHEN? - WHERE? - HOW?

WHY can be tricky as it often has to do with obedience, surrender, and living in mystery, as we've already discussed.

Our ways are not the Ways of The LORD. This is always good to remember.

Want to get a picture of how to ask God questions, check out this podcast to be inspired, encouraged, and perhaps, equipped to move forward:

https://podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/susie-larson-live/id545367760? i=1000648974872

DAY 7: Restoration ~ Rest in the Spirit....
The Father has not asked you to earn your place.

He has asked you to be obedient. To hold Him close to your heart and obey.

⁵Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;
⁶in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV)

Wisdom's Rebuke

20 Out in the open wisdom calls aloud,
she raises her voice in the public square;

21 on top of the wall she cries out,
at the city gate she makes her speech:

22 "How long will you who are simple love your simple ways?
How long will mockers delight in mockery
and fools hate knowledge?

23 Repent at my rebuke!

Then I will pour out my thoughts to you,
I will make known to you my teachings.

24 But since you refuse to listen when I call
and no one pays attention when I stretch out my hand,

25 since you disregard all my advice
and do not accept my rebuke,

²⁶ I in turn will laugh when disaster strikes you; *I will mock when calamity overtakes you* — ²⁷ when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you. ²⁸ "Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me, ²⁹ since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the LORD. ³⁰ Since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, ³¹ they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes. ³² For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them; 33 but whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm." Proverbs 1:20-33 (NIV)

Jesus didn't question whether you were worthy of His Great Sacrifice.

His first command?

From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Matthew 3:17 (NIV)

He only offered:

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

Matthew 4:19 (NIV)

And He asked:

15When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?"
 "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."
 Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

16 Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?"
 He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."
 Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?"

He said, "Lord, you know all thing; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. 18I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out you hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go."

19 Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me."

The Holy Spirit, though not given a specific voice, encompasses both the Father and the Son, and wants to be known by you:

¹¹ "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

¹²Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.

¹³You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

I will be found by you," declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 29:11-13 (NIV)

"But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you."

John 16:7-15 (NIV)

Holy Spirit, You are more than welcome here.

RESTORATION:

We have run a race this week.

Spend the rest of your time today sitting with the Trinity; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Be silent.
Listen.
Wait.

Don't give up.

In the coming days, go over the reflections and challenges from this week as you return to your quiet time with the Lord.