

You Don't Have to Face It Alone

I'm going to let you choose today's topic.

- Marriage is hard.
- Parenting is hard.
- Teaching is hard.
- _____ is hard.
- Life is hard.

If you are a follower of Christ, you can be thankful that God has not left you alone to navigate the tough parts of life. He has given us His Holy Spirit, and the Spirit has three roles in our lives.

Our source of wisdom. We certainly would acknowledge that God is all-knowing. There is nothing that God does not know or understand. James reminds us that "if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God—who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly—and it will be given to him" (Jas. 1:5). God does not play a mystery game with us, where we have to figure out the clues and try to guess the right answer. He loves us and will tell us what we need to know when we need to know it.

The ultimate way God has revealed Himself and His wisdom is through Scripture. As we read, we should pray, asking God to help us understand the truth He has given us. "Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who comes from God, so that we may understand what has been freely given to us by God" (1 Cor. 2:12).

Our prayer partner. Many times we know specifically how to pray. Yet there are other times, we are burdened about something, but we can't concretely express it. The Holy Spirit knows what's on our hearts, and He intercedes on our behalf. "The Spirit also helps us in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with inexpressible groanings" (Rom. 8:26). The Holy Spirit goes before the Father's throne, expressing our needs perfectly.

Our source of comfort. John 14:16 refers to the Holy Spirit as "another Counselor," a phrase that is sometimes translated as Comforter. What does a counselor do? The word refers to someone who helps, counsels, even protects, and the word literally means "one who is called alongside us." Doesn't that settle your mind just a bit, knowing that God Himself is walking alongside you offering guidance, protection, and comfort during the difficult days?

All this sounds great, but how do I get the Holy Spirit actively doing these things in my life? As a follower and believer in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is already in your life! God placed His Holy Spirit within you the moment you became a Christian. Even though the Holy Spirit is in our lives, we may not always be aware of it.

In West Texas, Thomas Hickox was a rancher and businessman looking to unload his 16,640-acre River Ranch. The property had no fences, so it was plagued by disputed boundaries. The land was in an area that had frequent droughts and "greasy" well water. He met a man named Ira Yates who owned a small but prosperous store in the small town of Rankin. The rancher offered to trade Yates the land for the store if Yates would agree to pay off the existing mortgage on the land. It was not a good deal for Yates, and his friends told him so. Yates made the trade anyway because he wanted a ranch. That was in 1915.

Eleven years later, Transcontinental, Ohio Oil (which later became Marathon Oil) took a gamble and drilled for oil on Yates' struggling ranch. The bottom line: Yates became an instant millionaire. Even now, over 90 years later, that land is still producing oil.

Think back to 1915. Thomas Hickox was sitting on vast wealth, but he couldn't wait to unload the land. Even Ira Yates struggled on the property for 11 years, not realizing the millions of dollars underneath him. It would be sad to have that kind of resources at your feet and never appropriate it.

Many Christians are like that. The Holy Spirit lives in them, but they never appropriate the power, guidance, and wisdom He offers. It is not automatic. We are commanded to "be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18).

The Holy Spirit is in believers, but His presence needs to be given freedom to permeate our lives. We allow the Holy Spirit to fill us when we acknowledge His presence, surrender ourselves to the lordship of Christ, and let Him have control. We are to do this day by day. Surrender to the Spirit's control. If you seek Him for wisdom and guidance, He will give you just what you need as you let Him work through you.

"May your gracious Spirit lead me on level ground" (Ps. 143:10).