

Understanding the Holy Spirit

What is the Evidence of the Holy Spirit in Your Life?

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Flourishing- "being filled with vitality and functioning well in one's personal and social life." - American Psychological Association

Paul's Prayer that Believers are "filled" with the "fullness of God."

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory ¹⁷ he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3: 14-19) Romans 5:3-5 & 1 John 4:13-17, 2 Corinthians 13:14

Agape: Defining Biblical Love

- Agape is a giving love, entirely unselfish.
- Love, then, is a condition of the will embedded in all fundamental dimensions of the human personality. It is not something you choose to do, but what you choose to be.- Dallas Willard
- A settled purpose to act in a way that brings about the well-being of another person- regardless of how they respond to you...love is perpetually outward focused -Tim Mackie
- "Love is the selfless gift of self, given and received." - Hans Urs von Balthasar

What Hinders Love? Fear.

"Fear is the great enemy of intimacy...-Fear makes us move away from each other to a 'safe' distance... Fear does not create a home. It forces us to live alone or in a protective shelter but does not allow us to build an intimate home."-Henry Nouwen

- "...For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." (2 Timothy 1:7, ESV).
- "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love." (1 John 4:18)

To love is to be vulnerable and compassionate

"To love at all is to be *vulnerable*. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket – safe, dark, motionless, airless – it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be *vulnerable*." C.S. Lewis

...but vulnerability is fertile ground for transformation.

"the transformational nature of receiving love in *vulnerability*."-David Benner

"Compassion is the experience of a heart that has known its own suffering and has been made expansive by the healing power of the love of God." -Juanita Rasmus

Colossians 3:12, Phillipians 2:1-3, Matthew 9:35-38; 20:29-34; 4:13-21; 15:29-39

Jesus' vulnerable example and command

¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you...³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. John 13:1-17; 34-35

¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

¹³ By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.

¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶ So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 1 John 4:11-16

C.S. Lewis' Four Loves

- Storge (natural affection)
- Philia (bond of friendship)
- Eros (desire or romantic love)
- Agape (selfless or unconditional love) Matthew 5:43-48

"Love is the acid test of Christian Spirituality " - David Benner

Thought Experiment: Consider your relationships in light of Paul's definition.

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. (1Corinthians 13:4-7 NLT)

The Rhythm of Your Love-Life : Incorporate practices that facilitate the surrender and transformation of self: Silence & Solitude, Scripture, Prayer, Fasting, Simplicity, Living in Community, and Sabbath.

Love Endures: And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:13)

Discipleship Homework:

God's love working through you in a rhythmic pattern, enables him to reach the greater community that surrounds you. His love in and through you helps to form the lives of those around you; you have the capacity to bind broken hearts and heal traumatic wounds that have lingered for years in the lives of others, to promote the flourishing of the hopeless, to pass on the flame of God's love kindled in your heart- a flame that was never meant for you alone; it was ultimately always meant to bring light to the world. (Matthew 5:14)

Let's practice, but you can't give what you don't have! Spend time reflecting on any of the areas of relationship listed above: family, friendship, or marriage. Pray as Paul did for the Ephesians to be "strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being," so that you might experience his incomprehensible love and offer this to those around you. There are many repeated practices that can create entry points for the Holy Spirit's love to flourish in our lives; here is one on prayer from Christianity Today:

Penetrating prayer. Personal prayer is paramount in spiritual formation. We present our whole selves before God through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, focusing much more on opening the self to God's call and much less on perceived needs. Prayer can be offered in silence and in reflection on God's Word. We can pray through the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. As Augustine, bishop of Hippo, said in the fourth century, "He who sings prays twice." We can use The [Book of Psalms] or other sacred texts available for worship and private prayer. We might want to employ a pattern for prayer. A familiar approach is the ACTS method: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Sanctification.

Prayer must be the primary conversation in our lives. The apostle Paul told the Thessalonians—and Christians today—to be totally open at all times to God's grace: "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" ([1 Thess. 5:17-19](#)).

A spiritually mature person can guide you through patterns and practices of prayer to help deepen and broaden your walk with God. This person can be a spiritual companion, a "soul friend" who listens and helps interpret prayer, or a spiritual director who has more authority. Becoming part of a prayer group (overseen by a mature Christian) also can be a way to practice the prayer disciplines.

Eleven Sixteen Day of Prayer:

Every Tuesday from 7 am to 7 pm we open our auditorium for seek the Lord in prayer. if you're not sure what to do if you come, here's a couple of things to know:

- drop in for as long as you want/can
- prayer guides are available to help
- prayer requests slides rotate on the screen
- corporate prayer with others from 6-7 pm (we also have some acoustic worship that happens throughout that time too)