

Fellowship with the Spirit part 1

Loving God with all your Heart Part 12

Selected Passages 9-4-11

Summary: The Spirit's primary work is enlightenment through the Scriptures. Respond by being receptive to that by eager, earnest study, and a believing, humble, expectant heart.

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John 16:6 Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. **7** But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. **8** When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: **9** in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; **10** in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; **11** and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. **12** "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. **13** But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all 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. **14** He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. **15** All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. **16** "In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me."

Introduction

When is the last time you enjoyed the presence of the Holy Spirit? You actually felt His presence, and it was so delightful to your soul that you are really looking forward to the next time? And when that happens, how do you know for sure it is the Holy Spirit? And what can you do to make it happen more often?

Today is sermon #12 of an extensive study on loving God, and we have discovered that the key to increasing your love for God is to have satisfying, delightful, joy-producing experiences with the presence of God. And we studied how to do that with God the Father, and then how to do it with God the Son, and now this morning – how to have fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

Fellowship With the Spirit

Philippians 2:1 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, **2** then make my joy complete by being like-minded

Paul mentions five things:

Encouragement
Comfort
Fellowship with the Spirit
Tenderness
Compassion

The first two are something *you* feel—encouragement and comfort. The last two are something *the Lord* feels—tenderness and compassion. In the middle is the connection between the two. He feels tenderness and compassion toward you, and that results in you feeling encouragement and comfort only when you have fellowship with the Holy Spirit. Fellowship with the Spirit is our way of receiving all that God gives us.

Scripture does also speak of fellowship with the Father and fellowship with the Son (1 Jn.1:3, 1 Cor.1:9), but most of the time fellowship with God is spoken of in terms of fellowship with the Holy Spirit, because our most immediate, direct connection with God is through the Holy Spirit. If you picture God as being up in heaven, and Jesus standing between heaven and earth to connect us with God, picture the Holy Spirit as being inside you. The Spirit is always the one spoken of in the most nearby, close, immediate, direct terms. Even in the Creation account – God is on high looking down on the creation, and the Holy Spirit is hovering over the waters – on site, doing the direct work on location. And that is the way God works with us, too. That is why Jesus called the Holy Spirit the Counselor in John 14.

John 14:16 I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever--
17 the Spirit of truth.

The word translated “**counselor**” refers to someone who comes alongside to help and strengthen. Jesus had been with them to do that, but now He was leaving. And to console them He promised that after He left, Someone else would come to replace Him in that role. The Holy Spirit is sent to come right alongside us and help us.

John 16:13 when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. ...**14** He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. **15** All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

So what the Holy Spirit does is He takes grace from Jesus and installs it in your heart. If you think of grace as being like computer software, the creator of the software is God the Father. God the Son paid the price to purchase that software for us. And the Holy Spirit then takes it and installs it in your heart – makes it a part of you.

That is why our verse in 2 Corinthians 13:14 says the main thing we get from the Father is love, the main thing we get from the Son is grace, and the main thing we get from the Holy Spirit is fellowship. So let’s take a look at what that fellowship looks like. We will take the same approach as we did with the Father and the Son – first look at what He does toward us, and then look at how we are called to respond.

What the Spirit Offers

I think you can boil down the work of the Spirit toward us into two basic headings: He makes us more and more holy and He powers the operation of the Church. The long word for the first one – making us more holy – is sanctification. When you read about the Holy Spirit sanctifying us, it means He is making us more and more godly, more and more righteous, and more and more like Jesus Christ in our character. The second part is empowering the Church, and I am going to hold off on that part until next time. For this morning, let's zero in on the sanctifying part. The Spirit makes us holy and He does so primarily through enlightenment.

Enlightenment

I don't think any function is more closely connected to the Holy Spirit than enlightenment. The Spirit opens our eyes to see reality. Wherever you see the Holy Spirit described you will always see a lot of terms like "knowledge," "understanding," "wisdom," "insight," "revelation," etc.

Isaiah 11:2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord

The night before Jesus died He told His Disciples that He would be leaving, but that they would actually be better off after He left because He would send the Holy Spirit. And He went on to describe what the Holy Spirit would do, and it is all about opening our eyes to truth. Three times Jesus calls Him "the Spirit of truth."¹ And in that role the Spirit will teach the meaning of Jesus' words, testify about Jesus, convict the world of sin, and generally guide God's people into truth.

John 16:12 I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. 13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. ...14 He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.

We could easily do a series of sermons just on this point, but instead let me just give you a few examples.

The reality of God's glory

One way the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to reality is by enabling us to see and appreciate God's glory. All human beings are naturally blind to that. If you take a person who is physically blind and put him in front of the most spectacular sunset ever, it will have no effect on him. Take him to the rim of the Grand Canyon – nothing. That is how we naturally are with God's glory. God's glory is thrilling, if you see it. But people are naturally blind to it, so they come to church, they hear a sermon about the wonders of God's glory, and the whole time they are looking at the clock waiting for it to be over. It is boring to them. They do not feel any sense of awe, they are not filled with joy, they are not amazed or delighted or even intrigued. The most spectacular, most beautiful, most pleasing reality in all existence is placed right in front of their face, and – nothing, just like the blind man and the sunset.

2 Corinthians 4:4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ

When your spiritual eyes are blind, you can read the Bible and understand the sentences and paragraphs and follow the logic and derive correct, accurate interpretations, but you are blind to the beauty of it. You can comprehend the meaning of the words, but you cannot welcome the message into your heart.

¹ Jn.14:17, 15:26, 16:13.

1 Corinthians 2:14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him

Remember last week when I talked about the difference between agreeing to something in an intellectual way, but not really having it sink down into your heart so that it becomes a part of the fabric of your outlook on life? It is not ingrained into your belief system deep enough to affect how you feel about things. When a truth is accepted into the heart and believed so thoroughly that it becomes a part of who you are – that is what 1 Corinthians 2:14 means by “**accept.**” That is what a spiritually blind person cannot do – until the Holy Spirit comes along and opens his spiritual eyes. So, the Spirit opens our eyes to the reality of God’s glory so that it actually strikes wonder and awe and joy in the heart, and thrills and satisfies the soul.

The reality of sin (Conviction)

And He also opens our eyes to the reality of sin in our hearts.

John 16:8 When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt...

To convict means to bring a person to realize his guilt before God. When we sin, we are naturally just as blind to our sin as we are to God’s glory. So we need the Holy Spirit to come and open our eyes to see how guilty we are, how horribly we have dishonored God, and how black our hearts are.² And there is no way to be forgiven until our sorrow over our sin drives us to repentance, so the Holy Spirit’s ministry of conviction of sin is a priceless treasure.

The reality of God’s Word

So the Spirit of truth opens our eyes to the reality of God’s glory, the reality of our own guilt, and third, the reality of God’s Word. You study a passage in Scripture, you can’t understand what it means, or you can’t understand why it is there – what the significance is for your life; and then the Holy Spirit comes and turns on the lights and suddenly you can see what it means. And now you can see the implications for your life – how to use that principle. He might use a sermon to do that, or a book, or a friend, or your own study; but whatever tool He uses, it is only the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit that makes it click in your understanding.

1 John 2:20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.

27 his anointing teaches you about all things

Contrary to what some people teach, the anointing is not something that only happens to certain Christians. Every Christian has the anointing of the Spirit. And we do not have to guess what the anointing is – John tells us. It is the Spirit teaching us. The anointing is a divine enablement for discerning and understanding truth. The Spirit enables you to understand things,

He opens your eyes to see the significance of them,

He softens your heart to be able to accept them,

He alerts you to the relevance of how it should be applied in your circumstance,

2 8 When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me (The root of all sin is unbelief – lack of faith in Christ.) **10 in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father** (During His earthly ministry, Jesus pointed out that the righteousness of human religion was inadequate and could never bring a person into His kingdom (Mt.5:20). But when Jesus left this earth the Holy Spirit took over the task of convicting the world of how inadequate its righteousness is. **11 and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.** The world’s judgments are all wrong (Jn.7:24) – especially their judgments about Jesus. Those judgments derive from the world’s prince, who is a liar. Now that that he stands condemned, the false judgments that derived from him are exposed as sinful and wrong.

He enables you to make connections in your mind between a new truth He shows you and the rest of your belief system so you know where it fits and you can place it in your belief system and remember it, and

He inclines your affections to be delighted by them.

That is the anointing and it is available to every Christian. The greater your fellowship with the Holy Spirit, the more you experience that anointing.

The reality of God's way (guidance)

A fourth way the Spirit enlightens us is by opening our eyes to the reality of God's way. He guides us through life.

Isaiah 30:21 Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

God promises to guide His people through life. How does He do that? Does He speak audibly from heaven? No. Does He expect you to interpret coincidences in life as signs? No. Does He give you a feeling in your gut or a quiver in your liver or some kind of vague, subjective intuition about what to do? No, God does not guide us through superstitious mysticism. So how does He guide? The Holy Spirit guides us by opening our eyes to wisdom. The path that God wants you to take is the path of wisdom. But very often we don't have enough information, or our thinking is cloudy, or we can't connect the dots on sound reasoning, or whatever; and the Holy Spirit then opens our eyes to see the wise path. And when He does that, you do not have to rely on some vague impression or feeling – the right path is obvious. You are agonizing over a decision between two jobs, you can't decide, you don't know which one is God's will for you, so you seek guidance from God and the Holy Spirit then comes and opens your eyes to see the obvious – job #1 would allow you to carry out the ministry God has called you to, and fits your spiritual gifts; and job #2 wouldn't fit at all. Maybe you were confused before because job #2 pays way more money, or it is a much easier job, or more secure, or whatever, but when the Spirit opens your eyes it suddenly becomes clear to you that your calling and ministry is far more important than those other factors and the decision becomes a no-brainer.

The reality of sonship

The Spirit open our eyes to the reality of the glory of God, our own sin, the truth of the Scriptures, the will of God in decision-making, and then one more that people often forget. One of the most important ways the Holy Spirit sanctifies us is by reminding us of our status as sons and daughters of God.

Galatians 4:6 Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."

Romans 8:15 you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

One of the ways the Holy Spirit helps us resist sin is by reminding us of our status. He gives us the sense that we can refer to God as Abba – Dad, and having that kind of a perspective makes sin easier to resist.

Through the Scriptures

How does the Holy Spirit do all that? Mainly through the Scriptures. The Scriptures are all His doing.

2 Peter 1:20 no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Whenever you read anything, anywhere in the Bible, it is the Holy Spirit speaking (Acts 1:16, 1 Pe.1:11). That is why the Bible is called the Sword of the Spirit (Eph.6:17). I don't believe the Holy Spirit ever says anything to anyone apart from the Scriptures. He does speak to us individually – I believe that with all my heart. But when He does so, He uses the Scriptures. If you are trying to make a hard decision, the Spirit will tell you which option He wants you to take by opening your eyes to various biblical principles and how they apply in the case of this particular decision. But I don't believe the Spirit says anything to us that is not in the Scriptures. If He did – if He gave you some message that had nothing to do with any principles from Scripture, how could you possibly know this message was from God? And if we needed some information or guidance besides the Scriptures, then how could Paul say that the man who has the Scriptures is thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim.3:17)? Everything God has to say to us comes through the Scriptures. Even when God speaks through your conscience or through the creation – even that has to be informed by the Scriptures. Neither conscience nor the creation tell us anything about God that is not stated with much greater clarity and detail in the Bible. So everything God has to say to you, He will say by His Spirit opening your eyes to the meaning and significance of the Word of God.

How We Respond

So, what does the Holy Spirit do? He turns on the lights so you can experience reality, and He empowers you to do His will. But when He does those things that does not mean you are automatically having fellowship with Him. Fellowship is not a one-way thing. It is a two-way interaction – God does something and you respond, and then He responds in turn. So how do we respond to the Holy Spirit? We have learned how to draw near to the Father, and how to draw near to the Son, now what about the Spirit? How do we interact with Him? What do we do?

There are several things Scripture tells us to do – walk by the Spirit, pray in the Spirit, live by the Spirit, don't grieve the Spirit, don't resist the Spirit, don't quench the Spirit. We will plan on looking into all those next time, but for this morning I just want to focus on the one in Ephesians 5:18 – **Be filled by the Spirit.**

Filling – a Great Experience of Enlightenment and Empowerment

What does it mean to be filled? If you study the concept of the fullness of God in Ephesians (and in the Old Testament background) you find that the fullness of God refers to an abundance of what God has to offer. It is a great experience of the presence and attributes of God. So to be filled with that means to have a life dominated by the glory and power and presence of God. And if the Spirit's work is enlightenment and empowerment, then being filled by Him will involve a great, abundant experience of enlightenment and empowerment.

The Flesh

The problem is there is a huge obstacle that stands in the way of being filled with enlightenment and empowerment by the Holy Spirit. And that obstacle is...the flesh. Wherever you read about this work of the Spirit – whether it be Ephesians 5 or Romans 8 or Galatians 5, you are going to read about the problem of the flesh. The great enemy of the work of the Holy Spirit is the flesh.

The flesh is that part of you that responds to the selfish impulses of the body. If you see someone who needs help, and part of you wants to go help that person and another part of you says, "No, I'm comfortable right here. I don't feel like helping that person because I don't feel like being

inconvenienced” – that is your flesh. Your flesh cares more about comfort and physical pleasure than anything else. Your flesh is the part of you that wants to eat twice as many calories as you need. Your flesh is the part of you that seeks sexual gratification outside of marriage. Your flesh tells you to sleep in even if it costs you your job – or to slack off at work just because you don’t feel like working. Your flesh is the part of you that panics at the thought of committing to some ministry that might end up being hard. That is your flesh, and that is the main tool Satan uses to get his work done in your life. Paul begins Ephesians 2 by talking about what we were like before we became Christians:

Ephesians 2:2 you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts.

Can you see that following the cravings of the flesh equals following the ways of the Devil? Most of the time the way Satan gets you to do his will is not so much through persuasive arguments for why his way is better; usually he does it by just getting you to turn the keys of your life over to your flesh, and let your flesh decide what you do and do not do. He knows that will work because when we allow the flesh to take over, it will always take us right down the centerline of Satan’s will for our lives. You have heard a lot of sermons on how to find God’s will. Here is one on how to do Satan’s will. If you want to discover and fulfill the will of the Devil, just turn your life over to your flesh. Just do whatever you feel like doing and make all your decision based on the selfish impulses of your body, and you will fulfill the will of the Devil.

There is a word for that. It is a word that you don’t hear very often, but it is the word that refers to what happens when you just give in to the flesh. Your flesh is always pulling you toward sin and a life of folly, and most of the time you are fighting against that. But when a person finally just quits fighting and lets go – shuts off his mind, stops thinking about consequences or spiritual realities, and gives in, letting the selfish impulses of the flesh just carry him away without restraint - the word the Bible uses to describe that is *debauchery*.

And debauchery is always the opposite of being filled by the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18 Do not get drunk on wine, which is debauchery. Instead, be filled by the Spirit.

The reason he uses drunkenness as the opposite of being filled by the Spirit is because drunkenness is such a good example of debauchery – giving the flesh control. Think about it – why do people do bad things when they are drunk? Is there something in the alcohol itself that generates sin? No. All sins comes from the heart. No sin has ever come out of a bottle. Does alcohol control your behavior and force you to do bad things? No. When a person is drunk his free will is still one hundred percent intact. In fact, that is the problem – his will is a little too free. There is no restraint. The reason drunk people do bad things is because there is a war between the mind and the flesh, and alcohol handicaps the mind, and so the flesh dominates.

There is a war that is raging right now and every day of your Christian life on the battleground of your soul. On the one side is the Spirit of the living God, who wants you to do His will. On the other side is the Devil, who wants you to do his will. The war against your flesh is a war between God and the Devil. Every moment of your Christian life, including this moment right now – every moment - you are either fulfilling the will of Satan or the will of God. And the big question for us is whether we are going to be tools of Satan to fulfill his will, or tools of God to fulfill His. And the main way the Devil gets you to do his will is by getting you to put your flesh in the driver’s seat in your life.

The Mind

What method does the Spirit use? The part of you that Satan uses to gain access to your life is your flesh. What part of you does the Holy Spirit use to gain access to your life? The redeemed mind.

Romans 8:4 [We] do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace

The main way the Spirit gets you to do His will is through the mind – enlightenment – turning on the lights so you can see the goodness and beauty and desirability of His way. Satan is all about darkness because if your eyes are opened to see the truth about his way all you see is ugliness and destruction. So he just wants you to stop thinking and act on impulse. But the Holy Spirit is all about enlightenment. So if you want to feel presence of the Holy Spirit, and you want to have fellowship with Him, it is going to involve your mind in a very significant way.

That is important because there are some of our Charismatic friends who think that the way to live by the Spirit is by trying to feel spiritual impulses. They thinking living by the Spirit is all about feelings and impulses. So instead of studying God's Word, they just want to live by feelings and urges and promptings that they think are coming from the Holy Spirit. And what they fail to realize is that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation and knowledge and insight and truth. He leads us by showing us the truth. The Spirit's work is to turn on the lights, to reveal, to enlighten, to make known, to open your eyes. That does have an effect on your heart and emotions and affections and feelings – but not until it passes through the mind. Feelings of joy come through understanding. Feelings of hope come through insight. Desire for God, delight in God, godly impulses – they all come through the mind grasping the words of Christ in the Scriptures by the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit.

Be Receptive

So, the command is that we be filled by the Holy Spirit. That is an interesting command because it requires us to be acted upon by Someone else. We are required to be filled, but we are not capable of doing the filling ourselves. So how do we obey the command? If the Holy Spirit is the only one who can fill us with enlightenment and empowerment, what is it exactly that we are commanded to do? If you are commanded to have something that Someone else is giving, there is only one thing you can do – receive it. So the command to be filled by the Spirit is a command to be receptive to what the Spirit is doing.

The Spirit does not force enlightenment and enablement on you against your will. If you are receptive to it, you get more than if you are unreceptive – that is why we need a command. So how do you become receptive to the Spirit's work of enlightenment? We know His enlightening work comes through Scripture, so how do you approach Scripture in a receptive way? One person reads his Bible and gets nothing, another person reads his and his life is radically changed. What is the difference? Or to put it in other terms, what did Paul mean by having your mind set on the Spirit in Romans 8:5? In this whole process of being enlightened so we can see the reality of God's glory and the reality of our sin and the reality of God's Word and God's way and our sonship, what is our responsibility?

Search Diligently

John 16:13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.

It does not say He will just fill up your mind with truth. It does not say He will tell you what the truth is directly. The promise is that He will *guide* you into it. You cannot be guided unless you are moving. You cannot steer a parked car. The guiding imagery pictures you as searching, and the Spirit letting you know where to look. So we interact with the Holy Spirit's enlightenment ministry, first, by searching for the truth. We study the Scriptures and we listen to reliable teachers and we read books

and watch videos and do whatever we can to learn, and then rely on the Holy Spirit rather than our own intelligence to make those efforts fruitful.

But do not expect the Spirit to guide you if you are not even searching. Do not expect to get a lot of insights from God's Word after three minutes of reading. Searching is hard work. The Bible was written in a different language in a different time to a different culture. And beyond that, God has placed the delicious, nourishing nut of the Word inside a hard, thick outer shell that must be penetrated. It is not immediately accessible.

2 Timothy 2:7 Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.

The Lord will give you insight, but not until you have reflected. The insight is not instantly obvious right there on the surface. That is why when you hear a sermon where the pastor just states the obvious about the text he is preaching, you go away feeling empty and unfed and unsatisfied. It takes some work to crack the shell and get to the nut. People ask me all the time how I come up with the insights I come up with. The answer is they come from the Holy Spirit – nowhere else. They certainly don't come from me. And if they ever do, then it is time for you to find a new church, because the last thing you need is more human wisdom. The insights come from the Holy Spirit, but I can tell you, they almost never come from the Holy Spirit on Monday. I will study all day on Monday – no insights. They usually don't come on Tuesday either. Many times they don't come until Saturday. Why is that? Does the Holy Spirit take Monday's off? No – it is because He is honored by diligence in seeking what He has to offer. It glorifies God when we will persevere and refuse to give up in seeking His truth, so He puts it up on a high shelf. Never out of our reach, but often on a very high shelf that requires some effort and diligence.

I once heard someone ask John MacArthur what the secret is to being a great preacher and MacArthur said, "Stay in your chair. When you're tired of studying and feel like doing something else - keep studying."

And part of that work involves learning how to interpret the Bible. That is why we have the class, "How to Interpret the Bible." If you haven't learned how to interpret the Bible correctly, then you will derive incorrect interpretations and what you will end up with will not actually be God's Word. I recommend that everybody go through that class – the notes and the audio mp3's and the videos are all available for free on FFYS.net.³

Believe the truth

But it is not enough to just work hard at study. There are Bible scholars who spend their whole lives studying the Bible who are not even saved. They know more data about the Bible than anyone and yet they are as blind as a bat. In order to cooperate with the Holy Spirit you have to not only study and search and seek the truth, but you have to have a heart that is willing to believe it. When Stephen rebuked the people in Acts 7 for rejecting the Old Testament Scriptures he said,

Acts 7:51 You stiff-necked people ... You always resist the Holy Spirit!

Those people knew what the Scriptures said; they just did not believe. In 1 Thessalonians 5:18-19, quenching the Spirit is connected with treating prophecy with contempt. Resist the Scriptures and you are resisting the Spirit. You are not going to receive the enlightenment of the Spirit while refusing to believe God's Word. The receptive heart is the heart that accepts whatever Jesus Christ says in His Word without questioning it or doubting it.

³ http://foodforyoursoul.net/ffys_v2/?page_id=37&series=30

Humble Yourself

And that requires humility. You will not get insight from God's Word if you approach it as a superior approaching an inferior. When people come to the Bible with an attitude that says, "I will see what it has to say, and then I'll decide whether I agree or not" – that attitude places Scripture under the person's own intellect. Humility looks up to God's Word and says, "Whatever this book says is true, and if it doesn't match my current beliefs then I will change my beliefs." And of course, humility is especially important when it comes to the Spirit showing us the truth about our sin and guilt. Without humility we will never be filled with the fullness of what He has to offer us in that area.

Study Expectantly

So we have to have a heart that is willing to believe – that is one part of faith. Another part is trusting that whatever God says will not only be true, but also delightful. Our diligence should come not from legalistic pressure, but from internal eagerness.

Acts 17:11 Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness.

Success in Bible study requires eagerness, and eagerness comes when you believe that everything God reveals is good and profitable and useful and satisfying to the soul. Approach the Bible with a halfhearted, lackadaisical disinterest; don't expect a whole lot of insight.

So every time you open your Bible, do it with an *expectant* heart.

1 Peter 2:2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk

Crave it – like a newborn baby. A newborn demands milk every three hours around the clock. He is devoted to getting milk. Deprive him and he will become as violent as that little life is capable of being. Then when he gets it, there is no greater picture of contentment in all the world, than a nursing baby. There are a lot of other ways to read Scripture. Some people read to gather support for their side of an argument. Others read out of duty. Others read out of pride – trying to show how spiritual they are. How are we to read God's Word? Like a hungry baby sucking with all his strength to draw out the nourishment of its mother's breast. Read the Bible expectantly. Listen to sermons expectantly. Remember the work that the Holy Spirit is doing, and be receptive to it. Oh, how much amazing insight we miss just because we don't approach God's Word *expectantly*.

Conclusion: *Legei moi!*

So be receptive to the enlightening work of the Spirit, and when you experience enlightenment, appreciate it for what it is. It is a personal gesture from God. When you are reading your Bible or just meditating on some biblical principle or listening to sermon or whatever, and suddenly the lights go on and you can see how the principle relates to your situation – don't say, "Eureka!" – say, "*Legei moi!*" *Eureka* means "I found it!" *Legei moi* means "He spoke to me." When the lights go on, it is not because your brain just happened to clear up. It is not because you had a good night's sleep, it is not because you are so brilliant. It is always because the Holy Spirit is speaking to you. And whenever that happens it should cause us to stop in our tracks and consider taking off our shoes because we are standing on holy ground. The Lord – the same Lord who spoke to Moses in the burning bush, is right there in the room speaking to you!

Benediction: 2 Corinthians 13:14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,

and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.