

Spirit Word

Christian Devotional

Peter Walker, 2017

'My words are spirit and they are life.' John 6:63

I dedicate this devotional to you, the believer, who wants more of Christ's living word – his Spirit Word - to you and through you.

'He must become more, and I must become less.'
John 3:30

Introduction:

Jesus came to make himself known. Jesus is his own message. He did not come primarily to teach us *about* this or that, or even *about* God. He came *as* God, to be '*with us*', to be '*in us*'. (Is 7:14; Mt 1:23; Col 1:27)

Knowing God is a deeply spiritual reality, as '***God is Spirit.***' (Jn 4:24) Knowing God, and knowing Christ, is not primarily a 'mind' thing, though understanding plays a part. It is not primarily a 'heart' thing, though emotions play a part. It is a deeply spiritual 'truth', zone, experience. It is seeing Christ as one with the Father – a vision that can only come over us by a revelation of God! It is, so to speak, seeing the 'un-seeable', it is finally knowing the 'unknowable'.

I cannot speak to 'how' we crack open this vision, but I can tell you a sign of how we know this vision has come upon us: ***we worship Jesus***. Yes, like the blind man who received his sight – not only to see life with his eyes, but to see God with his heart – we fall down and worship Jesus as Lord. (Jn 9:38) We worship Jesus as did the disciples after Jesus had walked on water, and stepped into the boat. (Mt 14:33) We worship him as he claimed we would (Mk 14:61-62/Dan 7:13), as we are told we should. (Acts 4:12/Phil 2:10) To deny Jesus this glory, this oneness with the Father, is to deny the Father. (Jn 14:9; I Jn 2:22)

This seeing and knowing of the *true* Christ, is revelation of God to the depths of your spirit. (Ps

42:7) It is only in his light that we see light. (Ps 36:9)
It is only by his voice and word that our hearts are illuminated to the *'true message of the gospel'*, the *'real Christ'*, his *'true grace'*. (2 Cor 4:6, Col 1:5-6, Mt 24:5, 2 Cor 11:14)

To see Christ in the flesh, and to see him perform miracles, was not necessarily to 'see' Christ. Many, many people witnessed him in the flesh, and saw his power, but did not believe. In fact, to see Christ and his power often ignited intense, murderous jealousy in people, and *'they went away and plotted his death.'* (Jn 11:53) To see with our eyes is not to 'believe' with our heart. God wants our heart! He goes so far as to say that without faith it is impossible to please him. (Heb 11:6) God wants us to see with the eyes of our hearts, and believe.

God shines the light of Jesus on our hearts, and calls us to repent of sin, and put our faith in Jesus. This is a profoundly spiritual revelation – to see Jesus as Lord. This revelation is a gift from God. This vision of Christ, the Messiah, one with the Father, will never be fully grasped, understood, or explained, but can be increasingly known, enjoyed, shared and powerful.

Have you seen Christ? Do you know that he is Lord? Have you repented of your sin? Do you rise to walk with him every day? Do you pray to him, praise him, look for his presence and purposes throughout your day? Is he your treasure? Do you share him with others? Do you need more of his Spirit in and through your soul and your mind and your words? Me too!

Let's consider more of how the Spirit moved in and through Jesus, and how the Spirit can – and must – move in and through us...

#1

SPIRIT WORD

'Man cannot live on bread alone...' (Mt 4:4; Deut 8:3)

People don't often say what they mean. They might be asking you, for example, something supposedly innocent and interested about yourself, but really their intent, their motive, is to distract you, and ultimately control you. Hopefully this is not what you encounter too often!

When Jesus was fasting in the desert, the devil came to him and tested him. The test for Jesus was not anything specific the devil actually said or challenged Jesus with. The test for Jesus was to listen only to God while the devil was talking, and respond to the devil – not according to the devil's questions – but according to the Father's leading. So it is really interesting to read and consider the detail of how Jesus 'answered' the devil in this exchange. Jesus never actually took his 'cue' from the devil. When the devil quoted scripture, or prefaced his questions with a wager, *'If you are truly the Son of God...'*, Jesus simply noted the 'spirit of the lie', and brought to bear a 'Spirit Word' – a Word of authority. (Mt 7:28)

You are named and called by God. You are his. You have nothing to prove to the world, and no argument to debate on the world's terms. You take your 'cue' only from the Father, as did Jesus throughout his whole life and ministry. (Jn 5:19) When the world brings you a challenge, quiet your spirit in that moment, and whisper, *'Speak, Lord!'* Respond as he leads, not as your questioner leads.

Activity: Read Matthew 4:1-11. Note the questions and 'position' of the devil, and note how Jesus responds. Jesus is never actually answering the devil directly. Also, after Jesus stays steady in being led only by the Lord with 'Spirit Word', note how the *real* motive and 'request' of the devil is exposed!

#2

SPIRIT WORD

'I will also ask you one question...' (Mt 21:24)

Begin by reading Mt 21:23-27. After you have done this, read on...

Often as believers we are on the defense with the world. We let the world ask the questions, and then we scramble to defend our position, to answer wisely, acceptably... The truth is, my friends, that the 'world' – that is, the systems of darkness, and everything that opposes Christ – is actually what trespasses here on the earth. Jesus has all authority on earth and heaven. (Mt 28:18) Earth belongs to Christ – people and animals – and every soul belongs to him. (Ps 24:1, Acts 17:25, Ps 50:10, Ez 18:4)

In this passage of scripture (Mt 21:23-27), the Pharisees come to question Jesus, to undermine his authority. What is fascinating here is that when they question Jesus, he questions them back. He puts a shrewd, solid question back to them that exposes a lot of layers – their fear of the people, their own knowledge of what the people believe about Jesus and about what has been said about him and his authority...

Jesus knew who he was, and what his calling was. He was not going to answer to the Pharisees. Now, interestingly, Jesus did not come out and say this, but rather he listened to the Lord, and brought a question to the Pharisees that put them on such shaky ground that their own confidence to question him vanished.

I remember a few years ago I was trying to grow in 'listening to the Holy Spirit', rather than just having lots of answers for lots of questions. And only a few days into this growth zone, a colleague at work turned and asked me in front of a number of other colleagues, what I thought of him going on a 'Zen Retreat', to a Buddhist Center in the countryside. Normally, my mind would be racing in this situation, and honestly, quite overwhelmed. I would be scanning my mind for 'answers' regarding Buddhism, polytheism, etc. But I consciously at this moment, paused. In a split second I lifted my heart to the Lord and asked for guidance, for '*Spirit Word*'. As clear as a bell it came to and through me. I said, '*Tom, tell me what it is you're looking for on this retreat, and I'll tell you why I think you won't find it there. Are you looking for peace?*' Tom smiled, nodded, and that ended our group chat...

Activity: Sometimes the 'Spirit Word' is quite shrewd, as with Jesus counter-questioning the Pharisees, referencing a web of local connections and relationships. Nonetheless, as with Jesus, the 'Spirit Word' that is shrewd, comes from the Father as quickly and clearly as the simple 'Spirit Word'. Sit in the Lord's presence today, and simply pray. Ask the Lord to pour over you more of his Spirit, and ask him to open your ears and mind and heart to his 'Spirit Word' when someone brings a question your way.

#3

SPIRIT WORD (Jn 18 part 1)

'Why question me...?' (Jn 18:21)

John chapter 18 is fascinating. When Jesus was questioned by the high priest about his teaching, he said, *'Ask those who heard me.'* (vs. 21) This response was considered disrespectful and Jesus was slapped. Jesus did not stop here, he pressed in: *'If I said something wrong, testify as to what is wrong. But If I spoke the truth, why did you hit me?'* (vs. 24) Jesus is not answering their questions, but exposing their hearts. They are jealous, angry, quick to violence. What he taught – he has in fact shown them – is irrelevant. They don't care. Hate is in their hearts. It would have been futile to begin a discourse on his holy teachings – that is, to actually answer their questions. Jesus saw their hearts, listened to the Father (Jn 5:19), and responded accordingly. A 'Spirit Word'! The 'Spirit Word' here, it is important to note, as in so many circumstances with Jesus and with us, did not bring sweetness to the moment, but violence, anger, reaction. Jesus was not violent or angry – never was in spirit (Is 42:2; 53:7); but his 'Spirit Word' brought these emotions and reactions of others to the surface. Don't judge a book by its cover, and don't judge a 'Spirit Word' by the response of the world.

#4 **SPIRIT WORD** (Jn 18 part 2)

'Is that your own idea...?' (Jn 18:34)

So Jesus has offended the high priest (see entry #3), and now is before Pilate. Pilate asks him a powerful, pertinent question. In fact, the answer to this question is Christ's own gospel, will be his condemnation, and he does chose to answer it directly at the end of the process. (Mk 14:61-62) But here and now, he deflects it, almost dismisses it...

'Pilate asked him, 'Are you the king of the Jews?'

'Is that your own idea,' Jesus asked, 'or did others talk to you about me?' (Jn 18:33-34)

Pilate gets unnerved and defensive, *'Am I a Jew? Your own people...'* (vs. 35) Pilate drops the question, which reveals that to answer it would never have landed on his heart. His heart was not asking; his head, his pride, his fear, his fumbling... Jesus speaks to the heart, pulls and presses and exposes the heart. The heart is what concerns Jesus. Incredibly – note this – Jesus goes on in this very exchange and says, **'Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.'** (vs. 37) And Pilate - after being given this answer, so to speak, asks the question: *'What is truth?'* (vs. 38) Again, note, Jesus had just pointed Pilate to and through the door of truth – himself - with the previous statement, and then Pilate, as if nothing had been said, asks the deep question, *'What is truth?'* (vs. 38) Was Pilate really seeking truth? The answer had just been laid out before him? (vs. 37)

The answer – Truth itself – was about to be crucified by him. Jesus speaks to the real questions of the heart with Spirit Words; he doesn't simply speak to 'questions' we might ask – and others ask – because we don't often know what it is we're asking, what it is we're seeking, what it is we're actually doing to truth.

#5 **SPIRIT WORD** (Herod part 1)

'Go tell that fox...' (Lk 13:32)

Begin by reading these 4 verses, Luke 13:31-33.
After you have done this, read on...

This moment is multi-layered. Pharisees come to tell Jesus that Herod is after him. But the truth is, the *Pharisees* were always after Jesus. Jesus manages to send everyone into a panic here. First, he tells them to tell Herod that he won't leave, but he does it in 'royal' fashion – excuse the pun! He tells them to *'tell that fox'*... They wouldn't dare carry that message back to Herod! Truth is, however, it wasn't about Herod. They – the Pharisees - wanted Jesus gone! Jesus exposes them in this. They say, *'Herod...'*, and he says then go tell Herod... Then Jesus speaks prophetically in this moment, in this opportunity, saying he is going to heal and work this day and the next day and that on the third day he'll hit his goal! (vs. 32b)

Here he deposits with these Pharisees a strange word of days 1-2-3, and leaves them to ponder. He also then adds a very direct hit, saying that prophets had to die in Jerusalem; in other words, he is a prophet, and these Pharisees were part of the murderous movement against prophets.

People bring 'points' to Jesus, about Jesus, and under the guise of this or that motive. Jesus listens to the Father (Jn 5:19), and speaks to the heart.

Activity: Spend a quiet moment with Jesus in prayer. Enjoy his meek presence, his friendship. (Jn 15:15; Phil 2:5-8) Given his power and 'straight-talking' nature, it is incredible, comforting, that he stands with you, sits with you, whispers to you as a best and closest friend. Just enjoy that for a while. Feel his smile! (Zeph 3:17)

#6 ***SPIRIT WORD*** (Herod part 2)

‘Jesus would not answer him...’ (Luke 23:9)

So now Jesus stands before Herod. If you see the previous entry, #5, you will see that Jesus had spoken strong words *about* Herod, and indeed, Herod had beheaded Jesus’ friend and cousin, John the Baptist.

We are told that Herod was ‘pleased’ to see Jesus, and that he had wanted to for a long time. However, we are also told what curiosity was really driving Herod, *‘...he hoped to see him perform a sign of some sort.’* (vs. 8) So Herod ‘plied’ Jesus with questions, but Jesus would not answer. Herod was not interested in the words of Jesus, but wanted to see wonders. And these wonders were for his own gratification, not so as to really see and know that Jesus was the Son of God. So Jesus showed him no wonders, and spoke no words. The true ‘Spirit Word’ here was Jesus himself, the *‘Word made flesh’*. (Jn 1:14) His presence was the Word of God, not anything spoken from his mouth. And again we see a powerful reaction – and exposure of the heart of man – when Jesus remained silent per the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Herod shows himself violent:

‘Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him.’
(vs. 11)

Sometimes the Spirit-filled Word, is no word at all. And the true heart of man here shows itself.

#7 **SPIRIT WORD** (Offended Pharisees)

'Let them alone!' (Mt 15:14)

There is a time for everything. (Eccl 3:1) There is a time to make peace – and we are told to be peace-makers (Rm 12:18), and also that the wisdom that comes down from heaven is peace-making. (James 3:17) However, the peace that Jesus leaves is *'not as the world gives it.'* (Jn 14:27) And the peace of Jesus sometimes comes like a sword, as does his Word, dividing joints and marrow, spirit and soul. (Heb 4:12)

Remember that Jesus also said, *'I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother...'* (Mt 10:34-35/Micah 7:6)

Does this nullify or contradict the very mission and spirit of Christ in *'turning hearts of children back to their fathers'*? (Mal 4:6) No! But it is critical to note that the peace that Jesus brings – and the peace he ministered daily – is one that brings a pure Word of the Father, a pure Spirit of Truth. And this often is the same as bringing a battle, or stirring a conflict. Why? Because the peace of Jesus is not pure? No! But rather because his peace is so pure that our world reviles and writhes against it. The conflict that comes with true 'Spirit Word' of Christ, is because, if needed, he will be proven true and every man a liar. (Rm 3:4) When we are being exposed as liars, we strike out like cornered rats. We bring the conflict, where Christ brings true peace, exposing our sin.

Activity: Ask Jesus today to make you strong! To help you know true peace that comes from his Spirit, even if it means you must bring a strong 'Spirit Word', or resist appeasing the offended. Read this passage where Jesus had offended the Pharisees, his disciples were not liking it, and Jesus said, '*Let them alone!*' (Mt 15:1-14)

Note: It is interesting that this argument with the Pharisees, and their offense, came from Jesus challenging their 'traditions' being put in front of their true faith, their religion before their love of God. This issue is as current now in our own lives, as it was then! (Mt 22:36-40/Rev 2:1-5)

#8 ***SPIRIT WORD*** (Politics/Taxes)

'... and give to God what is God's.' (Mt 22:21)

This famous passage about *'paying taxes to Caesar'* is a mind-blower! How many petty and fruitless conversations have you found yourself in where Christianity meets Politics? *Me, too!*

So here Jesus is brought a question about politics and power, and the very motive is to trap him, get him in trouble with the authorities. Again, pause for a minute. How many conversations and comments about politics and Christianity that come your way, might also have a disingenuous motive? Maybe to get you off true testimony to Christ, and into debate and arguments? Maybe to try to profile you as bigoted or judgmental? So how did Jesus deal with this question, this test?

Very simply he disarmed it, put it in perspective, and called everyone present to consider their relationship with God. In one or two lines – Spirit-filled – Jesus elevated this issue to a higher level, a Spirit sphere, and brought everyone back to the question of the gospel.

Activity: Look up now and read this short exchange Jesus had with the Pharisees and the Government: Matthew 22:15-22

Note: Jesus didn't really speak to taxes on this matter. He noted that man's face is on money, but God's face is on man - God has made man in his

own image! (Gen 1:27) Give Caesar his money, and
let Caesar give God his soul.

#9

SPIRIT WORD

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...' (Luke 4:18)

Jesus is given the scriptures to read. He opens Isaiah 61:1, reads it (*'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...'*), and then claims it for himself! (vs. 21) This is a powerful, stirring, dangerous moment! What happens? Well, we're then told, *'All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips.'* (vs. 22) But then...

Jesus starts speaking to the people directly, pointing out that in scripture the prophets were at times sent not to *their* own people (the listeners), but to others – e.g. Elijah and the widow of Sidon, Elisha and the Syrian, Naaman. (vs. 23-27) Jesus points out that a prophet – i.e. himself – is never accepted in his home town. (vs. 24) What happens? Well, this 'Spirit Word' brought by Christ made the people *'furious'*! (vs. 28) Now they drive him out of the town to a cliff with the purpose of throwing him off! (vs. 29)

From favor (vs. 22) to murderous threats (vs. 29), the 'Spirit Word' of the Lord will go forth, touch hearts, win people, and expose people.

Activity: Think a little about how you determine whether a 'Word' or action is truly Spirit-filled, honoring to God.

#10

SPIRIT SONG

'If two of you on earth agree...' (Mt 18:19)

We sing in church on Sunday morning. We all lift our worship to the Lord Jesus. Here we rise above our thoughts, our doctrinal differences and different ways of understanding God, seeing God, judging situations and people and circumstances. The eyes of all of our hearts look on the One Savior, and we hail his majesty in song. This is powerfully spiritual! How can we 'connect' here, and yet differ on so many other little things?

We all see Christ in and by Christ's own light. *'In your light we see light!'* (Ps 36:9) We see him because we are 'shown' him. (2 Cor 4:6) So the 'revelation' of Jesus is the one pure thing we all see and know, and all see and know in the same way. His light pours forth over our hearts and we are all caught up in that same Light – *'The true light that gives light to all mankind...'* (Jn 1:9)

If we can center ourselves on what we all see in the same way – Jesus Christ as Messiah and Lord – and try to do more of life and mission and purpose on this cornerstone alone, I believe we would find more unity, and more direction in the 'micro'. And I do say, 'micro', because lifting Jesus high, and taking up our cross every day, is the only 'macro' issue there is on this earth. If when we come together we put time, energy and heart in 'lifting Christ up' (Jn 12:32), this will calibrate our vision for other steps and stepping together.

#11 ***SPIRIT WORD*** (Quiet Facts)

'The king was enraged...' (Mt 22:7)

Jesus did not raise his voice in the streets. (Is 42:2)
This is 'spirit truth'. We know that Jesus was very strong and very straight at times, and it would seem in these moments his voice may have been 'raised' – such as his turning of tables in the temples, and his powerful, confrontational speech to the Pharisees in Matthew 23. But one thing that has caught my attention recently was how Jesus, even in the child-like genre of the parable, would calmly say things that were in essence terrifying.

For example, in this parable of the 'Wedding Banquet', we are told that after generous, even long-suffering invitations of the king, the king became '*enraged*', sent an army to destroy the invitees and burn their city. Just like that. We then move on to the next group of invitees. But if you stop for a moment and consider...

This parable speaks of God inviting us to heaven. It is clear as day. God, for the honor of his son, Jesus Christ (who is telling the story), invites us to a banquet, a party. He even implores us when we first refuse him. (see vs. 3-4) Here we see that he is gentle, long-suffering, not easily offended. (Pr 29:11; Mt 12:32) But then we are told that all our rejection of God, our refusal to come and receive the Son, will, one 'final' day, result in a type of 'eternal destruction.' (vs. 7)

The 'Spirit Word' – the true, strong word of God's love and justice – is laced calmly through every word of Christ. Jesus does not omit details of justice in the context of the story of his love, of his party, his banquet.

I have often left out the 'repentance' angle of the gospel, when sharing about Christ's love and acceptance. Recently, listening to an evangelist preach, I was reminded of this key, loving, gospel-centered requirement of Christ – repentance. Come to Christ, yes! But come with a heart that turns away from your sin! Repent! This is where chains break and people walk free – not only *into* forgiveness and salvation, but *away from* darkness and pain.

#12 ***SPIRIT WORD*** (Secret Mission)

'I have food to eat that you know nothing about.' (Jn 4:32)

Pause and consider this line! Jesus is saying to his disciples – not to the 'world' – that he has a source of nourishment (energy in, not energy out), that is *not* known to them. But these are his disciples! They know his mission, right?

This one line, one wind of God's Spirit, still blows to and through us 2000 years later! This is 'Spirit Word'. Jesus goes on to tell us that this 'nourishment', this 'food', this '*energy in*', is in fact, energy out!

*'My food... is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his **work**.'* (vs. 34)

Do you have a job to do for Christ? Has he gifted you to serve the church in a special way – your 'job' – and are you invested in this work?¹ Is it so special to you, a source of nourishment to your life purpose, that people near and dear to you '*know nothing about*' it?

'Your love, oh Lord, is better than life!' Psalm 63:3

¹ 1 Peter 4:10-11; 1 Corinthians 12:7

#13 **SPIRIT WORD** (Our Driving Force – part 1)

'Who will rise up for me against the wicked? Who will take a stand for me against evildoers?' (Ps 94:16)

We call Jesus, 'Light', and rightly so! (Jn 1:4,9; 8:12) But one does not walk long with Christ before he begins to mold us into his own self. We call him, 'Light', but then he calls us, *'light of the world'*. (Mt 5:14) His hands sustain us! (Heb 1:3) But then he calls us his hands and feet. (1 Cor 12:27) We see Christ coming to us, standing apart from us. But then he indwells us – *'Christ in you, the hope of glory!'* (Col 1:27)

He wills that we become one with him, that we see him and become like him. (1 Jn 3:2)

One driving force behind our 'Spirit Words' and 'Spirit Work' is to stand against evil. I love today's verse, Psalm 94:16, and other calls and admonishments of Christ to stand and fight – e.g. Micah 6:8.

There is a deep and wide reserve of God's favor and power and protection, for the valiant, for the brave, for the strong! There just is! We read it from Genesis to Revelation! We cannot and should not try to be heroes in our own strength (Zech 4:6; Ps 20:7), but if **walking with Christ, full of the Holy Spirit**, you are brought between good and evil, stand against evil! Stand! *'Who will rise up for me...?'* (Ps 94:16)

If you stand up for Christ against abuse, violence, pornography, prostitution, abduction, human

trafficking, brawling... Jesus will be honored, will blow
winds of power, will favor you!

#14 **SPIRIT WORD** (Our Driving Force – part 2)

‘Jesus was moved with compassion...’ (Mt 9:36)

We can be – and should be – moved to action and ‘Spirit Word’ by the evil that trespasses here. *(Remember, darkness is not legal here, but a trespasser. ‘All authority’ now belongs to Christ! Mt 28:18, Ps 24:1, Acts 17:25, Rev 1:18)* But there is another driving force through us, sent by God and giving glory back to God, which is compassion. Jesus was moved with compassion, cried with people in their pain (Jn 11:35; Rm 12:15), and wept over cities. (Lk 19:41-42)

Jesus got down low to reach us. (Phil 2:6-7) When Jesus, for example, looked on the ‘rich young ruler’, he felt love for him. (Mk 10:21) Jesus had heart! He was *feeling* the need, *feeling* the brokenness. In the passage from Matthew 9, Jesus was seeing the people as *‘harassed and helpless’*, and likened them to *‘sheep without a shepherd.’* This is a very stirring way to see people. This is almost an overwhelming way to feel. However, if this ‘feeling’ is from, through and to the Spirit of God, we can allow this feeling to blow through us. We can handle it!

Jesus said the eyes were the lamp of the body. (Mt 6:22-23) We need to see as Christ sees. Do not feel pressure to ‘see’ a certain way; rather open your heart to allow God to open your eyes, to see as he sees, feel as he feels, and respond – reach – accordingly. Let Jesus move you to ‘word’ and ‘action’. If walking with Christ, you will be able to trust

not only the 'Spirit Word' he brings to your mind (Jn 14:26), but also the feelings he arouses in your spirit. Go with this compassion!

#15 ***SPIRIT WORD*** (Sweet)

'Your words are sweeter than honey...' Ps 119:103

The words of Christ are pure. Everything about the words of Christ drip sweetness. God – who is 'Word' (Jn 1:1) – became 'flesh' in Christ, and speaks words... (Jn 1:14)

Christ is the living Word, the Word made flesh, and his own *spoken* words are '*spirit and life.*' (Jn 6:63) We are so desensitized now to the words of Christ for 2 reasons: 1) We have heard them so much, that they have lost their novelty value; 2) Our hearts are sinful, and we have little appetite for the pure.

But to the childlike, to him who looks on Christ with faith, and listens to his words with an open heart, here the very essence of the sweetness of heaven drips on the soul. When you come to this place in quietness, the world can be passing by, rushing on, but you are arrested by the sweet words of Christ. You gaze. You settle. You feel. You drift. You hear rushing waters of the deep calling to the deep... (Ps 42:7)

Ask God this day to open your heart to hear afresh the living word of Christ. (Ex 33:18)

#16 ***SPIRIT WORD*** (Wisdom)

Jesus' words are wisdom. Jesus himself is one with Wisdom. Wisdom was the first of all creation (Pr 8:22), and Jesus was the firstborn over all creation. (Col 1:15) Jesus is living, pure, flowing wisdom.

Wisdom is not 'what' is said, but is the Spirit essence of the Speaker. Wisdom is Spirit. Words in themselves do not carry wisdom. Wisdom fills and carries words. Wisdom has all things at its disposal, such as timing, heart, truth, history, and brings a timely word. Jesus gives life to all (Acts 17:25), and gives life to the dead. Jesus brings 'wisdom' to life in people's words, the same way Jesus brought Spirit life to people's bones in Ezekiel 37.

Paul quoted pagan philosophers, claiming and applying their words to the gospel message for *that* moment, *that* people, *that* hour. And these words came alive, were breathed with life, were given to Wisdom and now speak on behalf of Jesus Christ. (Acts 17:28) God is a Redeemer. The world is his, and he can and will make all things new. (Rev 21:5)

We take captive thoughts (and philosophies, and poems, and religions and art, etc.), and make them subject to Christ. (2 Cor 10:3-5) How? Well, by believing on Christ, and believing that the world and all that live in it are Christ's (Ps 24:1/Acts 17:25), and by knowing that all people are made in God's image (Gen 1:27), and that with the breath of God, the gospel of Jesus, we can bring light to bear even on lifeless creation. We don't just see light come to our

eyes, but we bring light from our eyes *to* objects and people. ***This is spiritual warfare, bringing the fight – the light – to the darkness.***

I don't just look for Christ in a place or a person; I look to bring Christ *to and through* a place and a person, and so bring them to life, and redeem that which up to that moment may have been in darkness, eaten by locusts. (Joel 2:25)

#17 **SPIRIT WORD** (You!)

'...what we will be has not yet been made known...' (1 Jn 3:2)

My friends, this world is hard, broken, unclear, unpredictable, and not your true home, and nor where you will be the truest you! (Phil 3:20)

We work so, so hard to 'be', to 'arrive'. We run so, so hard to find a place of rest, to stop. Are you weary? Me, too! Jesus called out to us all, *'Come to me, all who are weary...'* (Mt 11:28) Jesus also called out to us, *'Is anyone thirsty...?'* (Jn 7:37)

Know this: If you have come, weary and thirsty, to Jesus Christ, you have laid claim to your ultimate inheritance, your paradise destiny, your secret and true name! (Rev 2:17) You may still feel fragmented, patched together, barely holding on, but my brother, my sister, you are safe! You are now 'housed' in the name of the Lord (Pr 18:10), you are hidden with Christ in God (Col 3:3), you are being made new (Rev 21:5), and you will find yourself whole one day, walking through the Paradise Gates on streets of gold. Your inheritance is set. Your name is written in the book of life. (Lk 10:20) You are saved!

So even if life splinters and disperses around you, you are drawing every hour nearer to the most enchanting destination – heaven itself! (Jn 16:11b,33)

'The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn – ever-brighter until the full light of day!' (Pr 4:18)

#18 ***SPIRIT WORD*** (Jesus)

'Who are you, Lord?' (Acts 9:5)

Jesus is one with the Father. The Father is one with Jesus. I feel the real way forward in spreading the good news, is by spreading the good news. Not by debating false news. We need to declare who Jesus is, and what his message is, and let his own Holy Spirit vindicate and empower this testimony, convict hearts and fall on listeners. (Acts 10:44; Jn 16:8)

However, every now and again one must stand up to what is false, and contend! (I Pe 3:15) Gotta do it! And one of these key falsities is about the identity of God.

Many say that we all worship the same God – Muslims, Christians and Jews – and only differ on matters like the deity of Jesus Christ, etc. This is absolutely, 100% WRONG! My friends, let me explain. And if this offends or makes you uncomfortable, that is further evidence of this being true and a necessary reminder in your life!:) Remember, this gospel – Jesus is God – is the very reason Jesus was crucified. So it does offend in its very essence. It offends everyone! Why? Well, ultimately not because Jesus is God, but because we are not God!

Briefly, but critically: God expressed himself in Jesus Christ. It is a mystery. It is unfathomable. But it is the revelation of God, and the claim of Jesus Christ. Key scriptures to read, ponder, soak in, and not resist,

include: Isaiah 7:14/Mt 1:23; Isaiah 9:6; Isaiah 53; John 1:1-5,9,14; John 8:58/Exodus 3:14; John 10:30,38; Mark 14:61-62/Daniel 7:13/Rev 1:13-18; John 14:6,9; 1 John 2:22.

People will hearken back to the God of Abraham, but Abraham is not our starting point or finishing point. Jesus Christ is our starting point (the Alpha) and the end point (the Omega), and if people see and recognize Jesus Christ, this tells us that they were in the depths of their hearts open to the true God, the true Father – and for this reason they recognized Jesus. If they reject Jesus Christ, they are not worshipping the true Father. Jesus himself says this! (Jn 5:46) It is critical to note also that the Pharisees – descendants of Abraham and supposedly worshipping the God of Abraham – rejected Christ. Jesus brought this to their attention in John 5:39-40. So to claim the God of Abraham – Jews or Muslims – is not a ‘pass’ on recognizing Christ. You cannot honor the Father without honoring the Son! (Jn 5:22-23)

We preach Jesus Christ and him crucified (I Cor 2:2-3), and if people receive this message, we know the ‘spirit of truth’ is and has been moving in them; if not, we know the ‘spirit of truth’ is not at work in their ‘faith’, their ‘god’. (I Jn 2:6)

‘If you knew me, you would know my Father also.’
(Jn 8:19)

‘If God were your Father, you would love me.’
(Jn 8:42)

#19 ***SPIRIT WORD*** (Only One Safe Place!)

'The name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous run into it and are saved!' (Pr 18:10)

The name of Jesus is the only name! (Zech 14:9; Acts 4:12) God himself has lifted this name higher than any other name, and all of creation comes from, moves through, and is 'to', Jesus Christ! (Col 1:15-20; Phil 2:9-10)

When I share Jesus, I feel the full spectrum of truth moving. I feel the sharp edge of the 'exclusive' name and gospel that is Christ. I feel people's discomfort with this claim to their soul, this shaking of their idols, this upsetting of their 'relevance' and unity with the world and culture. But I also feel the winds of heaven. I feel the sweet dripping of the pure 'Word', and the deep calling to the arid, forgotten places of the soul. I see people soften here. I see their eyes well up with tears. I see people walk out of tombs of despair and I see light come to their eyes.

Jesus is the only safe place in this life, and in the next life. Yes, his name and his gospel can be an aroma of death to some – those who turn from God, and live for only themselves and this mortal stretch of time. (2 Cor 2:16) But to others, he is the aroma of life.

Jesus is the only safe place! Let this be your confidence when you brave the winds of testifying to Christ. Jesus is your safe tower, and the only safe tower to the sinner. When we see this tower, and are

fully convinced that only there, in the name of the
Jesus, is safety, we will walk through darkness and
storms to get there, and to bring people there.

#20 ***Truth is a Person!***

God expressed his highest truth into flesh and blood. God, who is Spirit, and his Word, which is his very self, became flesh – Jesus Christ. (Jn 1:1-5,14) Truth in the flesh.

For this reason, Jesus pointed out to the Pharisees that they might read and know the scriptures, but if they do not come to him personally, their ‘knowledge’ has no value. (Jn 5:39-40) Christ is truth embodied, and knowing Christ, is knowing truth at its highest, most living, spiritual and powerful level. For this reason, the Pharisees noted that although Peter and John were ‘unschooled’ men, they had a courage, a force and purpose, that came from ‘*walking with Christ.*’ (Acts 4:13) To know Jesus, is to have it all. ‘***Christ is all.***’ (Col 3:11)

You can know Christ, but have little to no theological training. You can have much theological training, and not know Christ. You can know *about* Christ more than those that *know* Christ, and not know him yourself. You can even do miracles in his name, and not know him. (Mt 7:21-23) To know the man, Jesus Christ, is, in a sense, where you can stop and hang up all the maps – theologies – that brought you to him. The purpose of the ‘Law’ was and is to bring us to Christ. (Gal 3:23-24) The purpose of Christ was not to bring us (back) to the Law. This direction flow of truth is absolutely critical, and must always, by the Spirit of God, calibrate how we do ‘truth’, how we do ‘Law’, how we do ‘love’, how we do ‘grace’.

If the purest essence of all God's truth is a 'person' – Jesus Christ – what is the purest essence of truth in me? Is it not Christ in me? (Col 1:27) God, I am confident, looks not at what I know, but at how much I am of Christ, like Christ, *'transformed into his likeness.'* (2 Cor 3:18) How am I transformed into his likeness? Contemplating him! The same way the face of Moses lit up with the light of God, so, too, our lives light up with the highest truth of God by looking at Christ. We let his Spirit imbue our Spirit – and this is going to by-pass our minds! (Ex 33:18 - Ex 34)

Paul himself hoped and prayed that we would get past our own limited understanding of God, to **'grasp'** how high and long and wide and deep is the love of God, and to **'know this love that surpasses knowledge.'** (Eph 3:14-21) If Paul hoped we would know Christ in a way that surpasses knowledge, why do we constantly limit our own knowing of Christ to 'answers' and 'insights' and everything that works *within* our understanding, not within the boundless space of where our spirit and God's Spirit commune?

The real challenge in growing close to Jesus, is that your own brothers – like his brothers, like Jeremiah's brothers – may not 'see' or affirm your spirit knowledge of Christ. What then? Do you distance yourself from Christ to be closer to men? Whose approval do you need to be close to Christ? From Genesis to Revelation, my friend, the closest people to Christ – the leaders of nations and masses – were misunderstood and 'countered' till the day they died! They were not made great by men; they were made great by God, despite men, and men's opposition.

Look up their stories: Moses, David (I Sam 30), Zechariah, Job, the prophets, and ultimately, Jesus himself. (Is 53)

Truth is a person, Jesus Christ. And the truest expression of you is going to be from Christ in and through you. It will be Spirit, even as God is Spirit, and Christ's words are Spirit. (Jn 4:24; 6:63) To grow in Christ is to know less, and know *him* more. (cf Jn 3:30) We know less about him – that our words can express – but know more of him, that our spirits recognize and enjoy. Facts give way to Spirit, as the day draws near. The closer we draw to the sun, the more blinded we are, but the deeper its light penetrates us. We might start to lose sight of its shape, its place amongst other stars, its borders and boundaries, but its 'glory' reflects off our faces with more brilliance, and reaches more people!

Draw near to Christ. Sit with him. Whisper to him. Listen to his voice. Receive his visions and pictures and promptings. Listen! Don't make his Word fit your understanding; make your understanding bend and re-form according to his Word! (2 Cor 10:3-5) Know his scriptures well! Read them, ponder them. Jesus quoted them all the time – to refute the devil (Mt 4:1-11), and to take people deeper (Jn 10:34; 22:44). God himself quotes the scriptures – Luke 9:35/Isaiah 42:1. We are told that the Spirit will recall to our minds what Christ has taught (Jn 14:26), so fill your minds with this material, so the Spirit can recall it to you when he chooses. We are also told, however, that he will '*teach us all things*', and this is direct whisper in the moment, such Spirit wisdom and

power as Jesus himself had and could never have come through mere learning or preparation. (Lk 21:14-15, Mt 7:28-29)

I hope you have enjoyed this devotional, and that it has helped to break open some more spaces of freedom in your walk with Jesus.

For more resources, please visit my websites below:

www.1peter1three.weebly.com

www.sharingyourfaith.weebly.com

'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.' Numbers 6:24-26