

JEANNIE CUNNION

CLOSER TO GOD

A 40-DAY PURSUIT
OF GOD'S PERSONAL
PRESENCE



CLOSER TO GOD

Books by
Jeannie Cunnion

Closer to God

Don't Miss Out

Mom Set Free

Parenting the Wholehearted Child



CLOSER TO GOD

A 40-DAY PURSUIT
OF GOD'S PERSONAL
PRESENCE

JEANNIE CUNNION



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KEY PASSAGE

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Philippians 3:8–11

INTRODUCTION

“I *still* want more, God.”

This devotional was born from that prayer.

And this is the story behind it:

Several years ago I experienced a fresh longing for God. This longing wasn't birthed out of a special situation or a particular hardship as much as it was just an increasing awareness of how much I need Him and a growing gratitude for His incomparable love. The longer I follow Jesus, the more aware I become of what an absolute miracle it is that He loves me and gave His life to rescue me. My longing led me to pray simple but sincere prayers like “I want all of you, God! I want to know you better. I want to rely on you more. I want all you will give of yourself to me! Whatever it takes, have your way in me.”

God answered my prayers, which I now understand He himself birthed in me, by creating a deep curiosity about the Holy Spirit within me. While I understood the Holy Spirit had been dwelling in me since the day I put my trust in Jesus almost forty years earlier, I had very little understanding of the magnitude of His role in my life. So essentially, God was preparing to re-introduce me to the One I'd been neglecting so I could enjoy the benefits of His presence that I'd been forfeiting. He was inviting me not only to know but also to experience His personal presence *in* me in a radically new way.

Over the last several years, as I've experienced more of His personal presence by welcoming the work of the Holy Spirit in my life, I've increasingly desired to go deeper still. Not to get things *from* God

but to get more *of* God. The *more* I've longed for is God himself. His presence!

And what's beautifully clear in Scripture, which God highlighted for me in my longing for Him, is that the path to God's personal presence is paved with the practicing of repentance and the pursuit of holiness.

Yes, *repentance* and *holiness*, two good things that often get a bad rap but that are actually utterly life-giving and freedom-bringing!

I should mention that I was raised as a preacher's kid in a home that very much taught me these truths. I've had what you might call a healthy relationship with repentance and a solid understanding of the Christian's call to holiness. But what I didn't appreciate, until the Spirit illuminated it, is that the deeper intimacy I craved with God would be an invitation to exalt King Jesus in areas of my life that I hadn't truly surrendered. It was as if God was asking me, "How *much* do you want more intimacy with me? What self-centered living still needs to be surrendered to me?" This isn't about striving to live perfectly. Far from it, my friend. This is about allowing the perfection of Jesus that covers us to wreck us and purify our desires and draw us into His presence and conform us into His likeness! God's love for us isn't based on our loyalty to Him. Jesus took care of that. Please hear me say I still miss the mark every day in a myriad of ways. I will never outgrow my need for grace. I only become more aware of how desperately I need it. And this awareness is what creates in me a desire to go deeper still.

See, though you and I may not personally know each other, we can be sure of this one thing *about* each other: We were created with a desire for a *deep* life. Our souls long to know and be known by God, to be in intimate, deeply personal, vibrant relationship with the Divine. We were made to both stand in awe of His holiness *and* relax our shoulders in the safety of His love. You are not the exception to this truth. I am not the exception to this truth. There is no asterisk to this sentence, pointing us to fine print at the end of this book explaining why certain people don't qualify for or desire a deeper life with God. Everything we chase or fix our attention on is an attempt to satisfy a longing, a deep-seated ache, a groaning to know God's wondrous withness.

But sadly, the message that in Him alone (alone!) will our unsatisfied souls find satisfaction can become so familiar that it gets lost on us. Or we become numb to it because we've chosen to keep chasing lesser things.

"I know, I know" might be our instinctual response to being told we were designed to enjoy a deep life with God—meanwhile many of us are sleepwalking our way through our relationship with Him. But I believe the Spirit of God desires to awaken us to a relationship with God that is marked by awe and anticipation of His activity in our lives. The Spirit of God desires to, and is fully able to, help us experience God intimately, to know how beautiful and beyond comprehension the assurance of His presence truly is.

I've written this devotional to help us cultivate intimacy with God. To know, *really* know, His withness. We will discover what God says will draw us deeper into His presence, and how we can invite the lover of our souls to have His rightful place in our lives. But for us to enjoy His glorious presence, we will need the Holy Spirit to create in us the same holy hunger, humility, and posture of heart Paul had when he penned our key passage, Philippians 3:8–11, printed at the beginning of this devotional for easy reference.

Let's read it together.

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Philippians 3:8–11

This is the passage on which we will build, and the one to which we will often return. We will pray that Jesus, by His Spirit, will allow us to

“know Him and the power of His resurrection” (v. 10) in a fresh and profound way. That we would, like Paul, see how the worth of knowing Christ, being found in Him, and being covered in His righteousness, surpasses all else we seek. And that a deeper life in His presence will be ours through the Holy Spirit.

Our openness to the Holy Spirit will be essential throughout these forty days together because a primary role of the Holy Spirit is to make Jesus increasingly beautiful and irresistible to us. The Holy Spirit increases and intensifies our awareness of God’s witness, and leaves us awestricken at the life-altering intimacy of the Trinity we are invited into when we put our trust in Jesus. This is what the Spirit is doing in me as I grow (albeit often slowly and sometimes stubbornly) in my willingness to yield to His leadership in my life.

I am so grateful for and humbled by this, and I want to assure you of something you will find reiterated throughout this devotional: I surrender all to Jesus because He laid down His life to save me and to make me a new creation in Him, crowning me with the identity of a child of the King!

So I am going to use whatever breath He continues to put in my lungs to help us encounter our living God who loves us with a breathtaking love. To shine the light on the wondrous and glorious gift of himself. He is worthy of our full adoration because He gave us His Son to bring us back into intimate relationship with Him. Relationship that, by the way, we ruined. He could have chosen rejection but instead He chose rescue.

What unfathomable love He has for us! He didn’t give us His Son to keep us at arm’s length. He gave us Jesus to bring us back into the intimacy of His presence.

Now before we dig in, can we name the elephant in the room? Putting the word *intimacy* and Jesus in the same sentence makes some of us squirm (awkward!) because of the physical, even sexual, connotation that intimacy carries. So I am going to give us the definition of intimacy, with a lot of other descriptive words, to help us usher the

elephant out of the room and back to the zoo. Or I guess I should say the savanna.

Intimacy is the state of being in a very personal relationship. It's *that* normal.

Words similar to intimacy include:

- *close familiarity*
- *friendship*
- *fellowship*
- *companionship*
- *togetherness*
- *belonging*
- *love*
- *nearness*
- *mutual affection*
- *closeness*

These are the words that I pray will characterize our relationship with God at the close of our forty days because this is the life we were made for! I'm excited to go deeper still with you into the beauty and mystery of intimacy with God!

What Can You Expect?

Come ready for a feast—a substantive meal to linger over. Growing closer to God requires time spent with God. Vibrancy and depth come from time in His presence, not from checking the boxes. I can say that with confidence because I've tried the latter approach. It doesn't work.

Over the next forty days we will engage with daily devotions that will invite us to

- practice repentance that leads to the refreshment of our souls;
- pursue holiness that leads to a freedom we've never known;
- personally enjoy the intimacy of God's presence;
- participate in the Holy Spirit's transforming work in our lives;
and
- prize Jesus above all else.

Word + Spirit

At the end of each day we will respond to a Word + Spirit journal prompt, acknowledging that both God's Word and His Spirit are essential to a deeper, more intimate life with Him. I will ask you to consider what the Holy Spirit is stirring in you or speaking to you each day, so I want to say this: If this practice is unfamiliar to you, or maybe even sounds strange to you, that's okay! It's more than okay. Don't force it, but I beg you to be open to it. This is a process! We are doing this devotional together to *learn* this practice, and I'm hopeful that at the culmination of our forty days, it will feel comfortable and even desirable. I will also be giving you tools as we go for how we can assess if what we are sensing from the Holy Spirit actually *is* the Holy Spirit. We will always test what we *sense* with what the Word *says*!

And finally, at the conclusion of our forty days together, hopefully we will have not only *memorized* our key passage with our minds, but we will *mean* it with our whole hearts. Oh, Lord Jesus, let it be so!

Are you ready to go deeper into the enjoyment of His presence? Me too! Let's do this.

Why Can I Experience Intimacy with God?

I'm guessing the question we each come asking is likely not *why* we can experience intimacy with God but *how*. We want to know *how* to have a vibrant and deeper life with God. We want to know *how* our daily lives can be filled with a sense of His witness. These are such good questions that we are about to answer. But before we answer *how*, we need to appreciate *why*.

Why can we experience intimacy with God the Father? God the Son? Jesus is why!

Without the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, we would still be “enemies” of God,^a deserving wrath, spiritually dead in our sin. Not only would we not be invited into intimate relationship with God, we would have *no* relationship with God at all.

The apostle Paul doesn't dance around this truth when he writes,

As it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one.”

Romans 3:10

I'm giving the bad news first. (Not the smartest way to start a devotional I want you to finish, but stay with me. It gets really good!) Not

a. Romans 5:10 reference.

a single one of us is righteous on our own merit. Show me the most saintly person you know—still not righteous enough to experience relationship with God.

Sin, which means “to miss the mark” through our deliberate decision to disregard God’s perfect standard of holiness, created separation from God. Broken relationship caused by our rebellion.

Paul continues, ultimately giving the Good News:

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23

For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved!

Romans 10:13

Jesus literally means “God saves.” God gives us eternal salvation through His Son, Jesus. And when we receive this gift through faith, we get to enjoy an intimate relationship with Him today!

A.W. Tozer wrote, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”¹ And I’d agree. But I’d also encourage us to take it a step further and consider this question: What comes into our minds when we think about the most important things about us? That’s what got me thinking about the way we introduce ourselves. For example, when we meet someone new, we tend to share the essentials first. Maybe we say where we live or what we enjoy doing or how we make a living. Maybe we share about our spouse and kids. But if being a child of the King is the most important thing, how do I weave that into the introduction without putting an abrupt end to it? You know what I mean!

Well, I decided to try it out at a women’s retreat when it was my turn to introduce myself to the group. I started with what feels like the most important thing. “My name is Jeannie, and I am a daughter of King Jesus.” Then I continued with the details one would expect. “I’ve been married to my husband, Mike, for twenty years, and we have five boys

who range from seven to twenty-seven. Our eldest son grew up in an orphanage in Haiti, a place we visit annually that holds a very special place in our hearts. We also have a Golden Retriever named Buddy, who doesn't retrieve but does bring us so much life."

Introducing myself as someone who is loved by Jesus felt right. Yes, I was in a group of women who also know they are loved by Jesus, so it was "safe," but the truth is, belonging to Him is the best and most important thing about me.

I don't say that because I have a particularly intriguing testimony of rescue. I just know that each one of us, no matter how little or much we have strayed from God's holy standard, is doomed without Him. We'd have to face the bleak and difficult realities of this broken world without His strength, comfort, hope, joy, and love. And we'd have no hope of heaven.

Believing that belonging to Jesus is the best thing about us happens when we are honest about the depth of our depravity, who we are without the righteous covering of Christ, and where we'd be if Jesus hadn't rescued us from the path of destruction.

Jesus, now and for eternity, gives us life and peace. And it's unlikely we will ever be compelled to "count everything as loss" compared with the worth of knowing Jesus—as Paul proclaims in our key passage—unless His sacrifice for us becomes so real to us that it wrecks us, in the most beautiful way.

Jesus took the brunt of our sin. He was crucified on the cross, His sinless life given so that we might not only have eternal life but also enjoy personal, intimate relationship with Him on this side of heaven.

When relationships go awry because a person in that relationship messed up, who would we expect to make it right? We typically expect the offender to take action to restore the relationship.

When it comes to our relationship with God, we are the ones who messed it up. Sin entered the world in the Garden of Eden and severed

**Jesus, now and
for eternity,
gives us life
and peace.**

the relationship. And there was nothing we could do to restore it. No résumé of good deeds and generous living was long enough to bridge the gap between His holiness and our unholiness. Between His perfection and our imperfection.

Well, actually, it isn't accurate to say there is *no thing* we can do. There is *one* thing. And it's actually the *only* thing.

The apostle Paul tells us what that is:

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

Ephesians 2:4–9 NIV

While we were still spiritually dead in our sin, God, the offended, sent Jesus to reconcile us to himself and restore the broken relationship. It's entirely because of Jesus that we can have intimate relationship with God.

So the one thing we *can* do is receive, by grace through faith, the free gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. When we accept this gift, Christ's righteousness becomes ours. Instantly and eternally.

Fully God and fully man, Jesus lived a sinless life and suffered a brutal death to pay the price for our rebellion and sin. But on the third day, He did just as He said He would do. He defeated death and rose again (oh yes, this is the power of His resurrection Paul talks about in our key passage!), reconciling us to God and closing the divide between our unrighteousness and God's righteousness.

Intimacy with the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) is a free gift given to every person who puts their trust in the finished work of Christ.

Jesus, whose name is above every other name, deserves our whole-hearted adoration and praise.


We choose whom, or what, we will worship on this side of heaven. Will it be Him? The One who made a way for us to have a life-altering and loving relationship with God. The One in whom every longing of the human heart is fulfilled. *The One in whom “all the promises of God find their Yes” (2 Corinthians 1:20)!* One day every knee will bow to His authority. One day every mouth will confess His lordship. And one day, when He returns, He will make everything exactly as it was meant to be.

Until then, we have been invited into intimacy *with* the Father through Christ’s perfect obedience *to* the Father. Jesus did it all. He loves you that much. He desires relationship with you that deeply.

I pray that sincere gratitude so saturates our hearts that we are compelled to give Him complete access to our lives in the days ahead. May we invite Him to have His way in us so that we may know God’s abiding presence in us.

WORD

For further study, read 2 Corinthians 1:20–22. Notice how Paul addresses the essentiality of each member in the Trinity in our salvation. Journal your observations below.



+ SPIRIT

What do you sense the Holy Spirit stirring in you from your reading today? Pray and invite Him to increase your gratitude for the righteousness that comes from faith in Christ alone!

How Can I Experience Intimacy with God?

I'm going to get right to the point. I hope it doesn't sound too abrupt, but it matters too much. Here it is: A deeply close relationship with God, one in which you enjoy His withness and are sustained by His strength, is something the enemy of your soul is wholeheartedly committed to seeing you forgo. It's true. Of all the things the enemy does not want you to experience (and there are a lot!), intimacy with God is at the top of the list. It's *that* significant in your life of faith!

If we have an enemy actively working against our knowing God's withness, we need to be clear on *how* we pursue and enjoy Him! The answer to how is the Holy Spirit! The work of the Holy Spirit is to ensure you know to whom you belong and to help you enjoy the benefits of this belonging! We get to live in intimate relationship with God the Father because of God the Son through God the Spirit.

The Good News doesn't end at Jesus' death and resurrection that reconciled us to God.

Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus ascended to the Father. But before He left, He said this:

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive,

because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

John 14:16–17

Sure enough, Jesus did as He promised. He always does. Ten days after His ascension, He sent His Spirit, not only to dwell *with* us, but to live *in* us.

Something that often gets overlooked and undervalued is that Jesus, during His ministry on earth, had the full power of His Spirit in Him. And then, after He ascended to the Father, He sent that same Spirit to live in and operate through us! The same Spirit who filled Jesus fills you and me today. Come on, that’s wild! But true. How does this happen? When we put our trust in Jesus, God places His Spirit in us to help us live in confidence of everything that is ours in Jesus.

As Paul explains,

He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Galatians 3:14 NIV

The truth that we, by faith, “receive the promise of the Spirit” when we put our trust in Jesus is the part of the salvation narrative that isn’t always told. And I don’t believe this oversight is intentional. At least, not usually.

For example, we’ve all seen how athletes write Bible verses on their bodies to tell people about the gospel. In 2009, Tim Tebow wrote John 3:16 on his cheek during the BCS National Championship game, making it the most popular search term for more than twenty-four hours. And I think that’s amazing. Yes, get out there and make your face a billboard for His grace! But can we consider putting John 3:16 on the left cheek *and* Acts 2:38 on the right cheek? Too much? That way, after someone Googles John 3:16 and reads, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but

have eternal life,” they’ll Google Acts 2:38 and read, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Or athletes could put 1 Corinthians 3:16 on their right cheek: “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” Or Romans 8:11, “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”

Any of these will do! The point is this: With the free gift of our eternal salvation comes the free gift of the indwelling power of God. They are inseparable. A package deal.

So yes, use your face or your car bumper or your IG profile to make much of Jesus. But don’t forget the free gift of enjoying the personal presence and power of God today!

We freely receive salvation *and* the Spirit. New birth. New life. New creation in Christ. The old has gone. The new has come.^a We are now Spirit-people. Filled with the Spirit. Led by the Spirit. Empowered by the Spirit. Transformed by the Spirit.

But if we don’t know this to be true, we keep living as self-people. Filled with the all-sufficient Spirit but led by the insufficient self. Fueled by the flesh. Exhausted and unchanged.

We cannot live like Christ without the power of Christ. Hold on. Read that again. We have no shot at living in our new identities as Spirit-people without the Spirit’s power. And we cannot enjoy the deeply personal, tender, and powerful presence of God without welcoming the Spirit of Christ.

If you have put your faith in Jesus, you are home to the Holy Spirit! But let’s be honest; a lot of us are a little nervous about making Him feel welcome in His own home. Let’s talk about why that’s so.

Have you ever made an assumption about somebody you didn’t know? Maybe the assumption was based on what you heard about them through a mutual friend. Or maybe it was based on something you read

a. 2 Corinthians 5:17 reference.

about them. Or maybe it was just based on how you'd observed them from afar.

We've all done it. And we often do it with people who intimidate us or people who feel inaccessible to us or who seem to hold more influence or power than we do.

And sometimes our assumptions prove to be correct once we spend time with that person. But oftentimes we discover a person we can appreciate or maybe even enjoy. Once we find ourselves in a conversation with the person we pass in the hallway at church, or the parent we only encounter during the school pickup rush, or the woman we've only known through a filtered life on Instagram, or that neighbor who we've only driven past, or that co-worker we've only emailed with, we discover a lot of our assumptions were unfair or unreasonable. We realize that our opinion of that person was unsubstantiated.

Maybe this is what some of us have done with the Holy Spirit. We've made assumptions about who He is, what He does, and how He'll influence us based on what we've heard about Him or how we've seen things done in His name (things that are not actually *of* Him). Or maybe we've made assumptions about Him not because of what we *have* heard but because of what we *haven't*. How are we to know the significance of His role if we haven't been told?

So our goal, for the next couple days, will be to get to know the Holy Spirit better and assess the assumptions we've held about Him because deep intimacy with God is difficult if we don't trust His Spirit. We can read all the devotions we want, but they won't make much difference without welcoming the work of the Spirit, the One whom Jesus himself called "another Helper . . . the Spirit of Truth." The Holy Spirit makes our relationship with God vibrant, alive, and dynamic. And this kind of relationship is available to every person who calls on the name of Jesus to be saved!

WORD

For further study, read John 16:4-15. Pay attention to verse 7 and journal your thoughts on why Jesus said sending the Holy Spirit would be “to your advantage,” or “for your good” (NIV).



+ SPIRIT

What is the Holy Spirit stirring in you from your reading today? Pray, and invite Him to increase your openness to His role in your life. If you're hesitant, maybe pray, “Make me willing to be willing.” He doesn't condemn you for your concerns. He knows how His name has been maligned, how His power has been abused, and how His essential role has been ignored. But perhaps today is the day we begin to move from being led by assumptions about Him to being empowered by a personal experience of Him.

Who Is the Holy Spirit?

Because we tend to think of a person as someone with body parts—head and shoulders, knees and toes—it might feel strange or difficult to say, “the person of Holy Spirit.”

But a Biblical definition of personhood isn’t the same as the children’s song. Biblical personhood means one with an intellect, emotions, and the ability to make decisions. It means you can do relational things, and we undoubtedly see these relational characteristics in all three persons in the Trinity. Yes, even in the Holy Spirit.

So let’s get to know Him as a Person—it’s important!

God eternally exists as three distinct yet inseparable persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is one God, and each person in the Trinity is *fully* God. This means the Holy Spirit is fully God.

My son Finn, who is seven, recently pressed me on this after we read a chapter in *The Jesus Storybook Bible*. “Mom, you’ve always said there is only one true God. But if God is God, and Jesus is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, then that means there are three gods.” Maybe, even as adults, we can identify with Finn’s struggle to comprehend the complexity of the Trinity. But as I explained to Finn, while it is a mystery, the more we read Scripture, the better we’ll see the Trinity’s unity. One God in three persons.

The Holy Spirit is called the third person of the Trinity because He proceeds from the Father and Son. Third person in procession does not mean third place in priority. Third does not mean He is subordinate or

less important. He is equal in value and equally essential in the believer's life, and any attempt to live in the *abundance* of God requires *all* of God. *All* being Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Scripture refers to the Spirit in a variety of ways—"the Spirit of God," "The Spirit of the LORD," "the Holy Spirit," "the Spirit of holiness," "the Spirit," and "the Spirit of Christ."^a When you see any of these descriptions, they are all talking about the same divine Person. The Holy Spirit.

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit coexist as the eternal (no beginning and no end), omnipresent (existing everywhere at all times), omniscient (knowing everything), omnipotent (all-powerful), Godhead. Throughout Scripture, we see the trinitarian nature of God on full display!

There are a million other things I want to say about this, but we must keep going. Consider this the CliffsNotes description (and refer to my previous book, *Don't Miss Out*, for a thorough dive into who the Holy Spirit is, what the Holy Spirit does, and why it matters so much!).

It's probably also helpful to address how we might think of the Holy Spirit as an object or a force because these are ways He is symbolized in Scripture. To name a few instances, we see Him descend as a dove at Jesus' baptism in Mark 1:10 and flickering over people's heads as fire on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:2–3. Also, Jesus describes Him as a flowing river in John 7:37–39 and compares Him to the wind in John 3:8.

While all these symbols carry significance and help us understand how the Spirit works in our world and our lives, He isn't an *it*. He is a divine and indispensable Person of the Trinity. And though His form is not physical, His friendship is experiential.

The more we get to know Him, getting our facts straight from Scripture, I think we'll be stunned that we get to call Him our friend and we'll want to invest a great deal into the relationship! We will only want more of this Person. So let's talk specifics.

a. Genesis 1:2; Exodus 31:3; Judges 3:10; Matthew 1:18; Romans 1:4; Galatians 5:22–23; Ephesians 4:30; 1 Peter 1:11.

He Has a Mind

The Holy Spirit has a brilliant mind. So brilliant we can't grasp it. Paul explains,

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined,
what God has prepared for those who love him”—

these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

1 Corinthians 2:9–13

We can't read one another's minds—usually a good thing, right? But there are those times when you've probably had someone, with whom you're having a misunderstanding, say, “I can't read your mind! How was I supposed to know?” That's when it would be helpful to be a mind reader. Otherwise, I think we'd agree it's better that our thoughts are only ours! But it's different with God. Though no one can know God's thoughts except God's Spirit, the Spirit doesn't keep all those to himself. He shares with us! The “mind of the Spirit”—as described in Romans 8:27—searches and dives into the deep things of God and returns to the surface, so to speak, to reveal glorious things to us! What God has done for us, and the inconceivable goodness He has in mind for us, are revealed to us by the Spirit! Are we leaning in and listening?

He Has Feelings

The Holy Spirit is not just a deep thinker. He's a deep feeler. And He stirs up sincere feelings for God in us! And to clarify, this is radically

different than the insincere emotionalism that is sometimes attached to Him.

There are many examples in Scripture of the Spirit having feelings. I'll give just a few. In Romans 15:30, Paul appeals to fellow believers “by the love of the Spirit.” In Hebrews 10:26–29, we learn the Spirit is “outraged” when we use grace as a license for sin. And in Ephesians 4:30, Paul explains how we bring *grief* to the Holy Spirit when He must co-exist with our intentional sin. His feelings are about our flourishing and the fame of God’s name.

He Has a Will

And finally, the Holy Spirit is a decision-maker. He has a will and makes choices on our behalf. For example, did you know that your spiritual gifts were chosen specifically for you by Him? It’s not random that you shine where you do. Your spiritual gifts were given to you by the Spirit of God. He decides who gets what, and when.^b

Further examples include Acts 15:28, where Paul explains how “it seemed good to the Holy Spirit” to make decisions on the people’s behalf. Again in Acts 16:6–7, Paul shows us how the Holy Spirit directs us, keeping us from territory that isn’t ours to occupy.

The Spirit’s Role in Relationship

Not only does the Holy Spirit have relational characteristics, but He is the One who makes our relationship with God so deeply personal and intimate. He is the personal presence of God in us. He is the person of the Trinity by whom we experience God so intimately.

This is the heart of Paul’s teaching in Ephesians 3:14–21:

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of

b. 1 Corinthians 12:11 reference.

his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Paul prays that we may be strengthened with what? Power. How? Through the Holy Spirit! Where? In our inner man. In our spirit. Why? That we would comprehend the incomprehensible love of Jesus and be filled with the fullness of God!

Intimacy with God is the goal, and it is entirely possible for every person in whom Christ dwells. The Holy Spirit strengthens us with power to have more than head knowledge of God's love. He makes it real in our inner being, bringing intimacy into our relationship with our triune God.

The doctrine of the Trinity is essential to our understanding and enjoying intimacy with God! What a gift we've been given in Him!

WORD

For further study, reread Ephesians 3:14-21. But this time, pay particular attention to the last sentence. Notice what God is able to do by the Spirit's power at work within us, "far more abundantly" than we can imagine!

SPIRIT ---

Which relational characteristic(s) of the Holy Spirit stood out to you or surprised you most? Why? Journal your thoughts below and pay attention in the days ahead to these aspects of His personhood.