

## Experiencing the Work of the Holy Spirit

John 16:5-15

If you are a teacher then you know the experience of knowing and the sometimes frustrating process of passing on that knowledge to your students. The other day when I went to Hanford with Pastor Bob, he was beginning the process of teaching a karate movement to the students. They went through it step by step and you might say that some of the student had their own interpretation of the movement. What they were doing did not look exactly like what they were being taught. To help correct this, Pastor Bob had a couple of the Junior Black Belts demonstrate the movement. They were smooth and fluid and never seemed to be wondering what they would be doing next. But then the 2 Black Belts were asked to demonstrate the same movement, they were much faster than the Junior Black Belts and the kicks and punches were actually delivered as if they were kicks and punches. It was not possible for the newer students to immediately replicate what the Black Belts did. They had to learn the movement step by step and then grow more and more accustomed to it. It will take years to get to where they can do the movement like a Black Belt.

Imagine the experience of Jesus as He took on the project of preparing 12 rough Galileans for the representing Him and the good news of salvation to the world. He needed to teach them first to be men of God and then, out of that, He could mold them into the evangelists and prophets that they must become in order to carry out their task. Imagine being Peter and as you are paying close attention to what Jesus is teaching about forgiveness you think you've got it. You ask, "How many times should I forgive my brother if he sins against me? And Jesus answers, not seven times but seventy times seven. Or, if you were just one of the twelve and you were, like Jesus, in the boat as the storm came up. He was sleeping up under the bow but the waves kept getting deeper and more severe. You are experienced at sea but you've never seen anything like this. Soon, the waves are crashing over the gunwale and the water in the boat is getting deeper. You can feel the hesitation as the boat is now only reluctantly climbing over each wave.

It's only a matter of time now before a wave will be too steep, too tall, for the boat to survive. "Wake Him up!" someone shouts. "We are going to go under." So, you call out, "Jesus, we're going under!" You shake Him, "Please, help us. Do something! And, He looks right at you and to the others and asks, "Don't you have any faith at all?"

If you had asked them if they had faith before this event, they would have affirmed their faith with assurance. If Jesus had been asked for a frank assessment, He could have voiced His reservations. He knows what it is supposed to look like and He knows the difference between what faith is and the faith that you have. He used the storm to show the disciples what they would not have otherwise accepted.

The Holy Spirit does this "Jesus" work in our lives. He knows what our lives should look like and He is constantly teaching us, egging us on to a state more like what we should be. We are usually not aware of how badly we are living but, slowly and incrementally, The Spirit works toward our transformation.

I am coaching basketball and I have a gifted player who has a certain measure of raw talent. But he is inexperienced and some of his mechanics are very bad. Everybody is in love with the 3 point shot. And it is very dramatic when you make such a shot in the game. The ref. holds up both hands in a touchdown type of signal to indicate that the basket counts for three points and the crowd goes wild. My player also loved to shoot the three pointer and he could make it sometimes but his mechanics were very bad. His technique made me cringe every time he shot. Instead of launching straight up and releasing the ball off of his fingertips above his head he would lean forward so that his entire body was off balance and then jump forward releasing the ball from his waist. It is a testament to his athleticism that he did not land on his face every time he attempted this shot. Whenever he made a 3 pointer he thought that he was doing pretty good. What I could see was that his shot had no future. He looked like he was jumping off of a bridge every time he shot it. At any higher level of play it was going to be blocked every time. I tried to get him to change it but he was not open to what I was saying. The shot felt good to him. But, the more he plays, the more he will notice

that his shot is different and when he starts having trouble getting it off he'll begin looking for answers. At a certain point he will realize that if he wants to be a good 3 point shooter, he will have to change his shot. The coach who sees that he is now ready and who says, "Here, try it like this." will be coming alongside to help like the Holy Spirit does in our lives. The disciples were used to this since this is what Jesus did for them.

But we should not assume that God will always be a passive partner in our spiritual journey. He is capable of using means to get our attention and to awaken us to the changes that are needed in our lives. A teacher might require her students to copy every missed spelling word 5 times and then use it in a sentence. A Karate instructor might stop a student's kata and have her repeat a movement until it is right, or at least until it is better. A coach might introduce drills intended to teach the right mechanics and continue to do so until the players get it right. In each of these cases, the leader is more committed to excellence than the student is. What the student needs most is the commitment of the teacher.

Hebrews 12 demonstrates the process that God will apply to our need to develop spiritual maturity. There is first the example of the cloud of witnesses. Their faith and walk with the Lord demonstrates what is possible and challenges us to reach for more than what we have yet attained. Part of this is being realistic about our personal challenges, our "sin that easily ensnares us" and running the race with endurance. But it is Jesus who is ultimately our example. He looked beyond His suffering to the promised joy of resurrection and salvation and so He was faithful and completed His work. If you think you have it hard then just think about all that Jesus suffered for you. His victory is meant to energize you to overcome your weariness and discouragement. Whatever effort you have made for Christ this far, it does not compare to what He has done for you. And we have this reminder from the scriptures, "Do not despise the chastening of the Lord... for whom the Lord loves, He chastens..." A parent's love is demonstrated through chastening (discipline). The same can be said of teachers, karate instructors and coaches. So hear the scripture, "Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present but

painful, nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been renewed by it."

So gather yourself. Get ready to go. Prepare for the long haul. Be determined to reject any compromise with the devil. Don't miss out on the opportunity God's grace provides.