**Trust the Spirit of Truth**

**By Jeff McDowell**

**May 18, 2025**

5th Sunday of Easter, Year C

**Sermon Series:** 2nd of 4 sermons on the Holy Spirit.

**Sermon theme:** When we hear something that seems off: a belief, idea or action, our common sense and intuition can help us know right from wrong. However, these ways of knowing truth are fallible, because what is common may not be what God wants and what seems right can be genuinely wrong. Also, the stain of sin affects our thinking and can “sear our conscience like a hot iron.” (I Timothy 4:2) Thank God we have the Holy Spirit to lead us, guide us and show us the truth in all situations. The first step of life in the Spirit is trusting that Spirit is God, and God will lead us into all truth. To get closer to God’s way of living we must trust the Holy Spirit is always right and is always there to lead us. Truth is not relative to how we feel or what we think, but is rooted in God, demonstrated through Jesus and confirmed by the Holy Spirit to believers. If something **sounds too good to be godly,** it probably is. Christians do not need to be deceived.

**Proverbs 2:1-8**

**The Value of Wisdom**

**1**My child, if you accept my words  
    and treasure up my commandments within you,  
**2**making your ear attentive to wisdom  
    and inclining your heart to understanding;  
**3**if you indeed cry out for insight,  
    and raise your voice for understanding;  
**4**if you seek it like silver,  
    and search for it as for hidden treasures—  
**5**then you will understand the fear of the Lord  
    and find the knowledge of God.  
**6**For ***the Lord gives wisdom;  
    from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;  
7he stores up sound wisdom for the upright***;  
    he is a shield to those who walk blamelessly,  
**8**guarding the paths of justice  
    and preserving the way of his faithful ones.

**John 14:15-17 & 25-27**

**The Promise of the Holy Spirit**

**15**‘If you love me, you will keep my commandments. **16**And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. **17**This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

**25**‘I have said these things to you while I am still with you. **26**But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. **27**Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

SERMON START

I was a reluctant pastor. I knew God called me into this work, but I did not feel confident that I could stand up in front of people and preach something helpful, something meaningful and something to help the Methodists of the world (or at least of my church) get closer to God.

I went to my preaching professor once and said,

“I took this personality test and it says I am an introvert. How can I preach to people being an introvert?”

He looked at me and said, “an extrovert can preach, shooting from the hip, and do well. An introvert cannot do that, so will spend more time preparing a sermon. Introverts make great preachers and pastors.”

That was in 1987. I have been preaching in Methodist churches since then.

“Hindsight is 20/20 vision.” This means that when we look back on our life, on something that happened we did not understand at the time, we can come to see the meaning of it, the purpose of it. To me as a Christian, looking back on life shows me that God was working even when I did not know it.

Last Sunday I began a 4-week sermon series on the Holy Spirit. My point was that with the Holy Spirit, we are never alone.

*“Just as Jesus predicted his death, he prepared his disciples to face the future by promising the Holy Spirit. He called this spirit an unusual word: paraclete, which has been translated in many ways. The simplest meaning is* ***divine helper****. Jesus promised that God would send a divine helper who comes alongside us will be with us so we can survive the challenge of living as Christians in a troubled world. Another meaning of paraclete is* ***‘comforter.’”***

***And we need comfort sometimes.***

***Open yourself to the Holy Spirit of God. And you will never, ever be alone again.***

In my first full time church I had an **antagonist.** If I said blue, he said yellow. If I said go he said stop. If I said try something new, he said “we already tried that and it didn’t work.”

We did a dance in ministry for nine years. Looking back, he wasn’t that bad, but working with him prepared me for the antagonist I had in my second full time church. I realized after about 5 years there, that A #1 had been used by God to train me for A #2. I had a lot to learn: peace, patience, kindness, endurance, and speaking up for what is right. Then I became a superintendent. I knew God called me to it, but I told the bishop all the reasons I would not be great at that and the timing was not good. He listened, then told me God had him praying about me for 6 weeks and it was clear that God would fulfill His calling. But he would not push me into it kicking and screaming.

Eventually I said yes, at great cost to our family in the move, and became a D.S. Antagonist #1 and #2 had trained me for numerous antagonists in the churches, some of whom did not like the conference and did not appreciate me coming to them as the conference representative. Somehow I had learned the hard way, not to take things so personally!

God trained me through difficulty, through pain, and *I could only see that after the fact.*

Friend, what is God training you for right now?

[*Hebrews 12:5*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews%2012%3A5&version=NRSVA)

*And you have forgotten****the****exhortation that addresses you as children— ‘My child, do not regard lightly****the******discipline******of******the******Lord****, or lose heart when you are punished by him;* ***7****Endure trials for the sake of discipline. God is treating you as children; for what child is there whom a parent does not discipline?****8****If you do not have that discipline in which all children share, then you are illegitimate and not his children.****9****Moreover, we had human parents to discipline us, and we respected them. Should we not be even more willing to be subject to the Father of spirits and live?****10****For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share his holiness.****11****Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

Today we are talking about the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said once to Peter, one of his disciples, *“you do not know what I am doing, but later you will understand.”* John 13:7

In a sense, that is what living as a Christian is. We must trust the process of following Jesus and trust that He will explain the things of God to us in God’s timing.

The promise of the Holy Spirit is key to a believer’s life. Jesus left us here when he ascended to heaven, BUT he said *“I will be with you always, even until the end of the world.”* Mt. 28:20

How can this be? He ascended to heaven but promised to never leave us or forsake us!

The key to Christian living is to trust these seemingly opposing truths:

1. God is always with us;
2. We cannot see God with us.

How then, shall we live? We must trust His words of promise.

The Holy Spirit is God. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity in our churchy language and understanding. When you are confused about anything related to God, look to the words and teaching of Jesus in the Bible.

*“****15****‘If you love me, you will keep my commandments.****16****And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate (helper, counselor, guide) to be with you forever.”*

Today we are building up to the celebration of Pentecost, this year on June 8th. On the day of Pentecost in the Bible, after Jesus had died, risen from the dead, appeared to the disciples, and then ascended to heaven, the Holy Spirit came in power on them, and the Christian church was born. When the Holy Spirit came, it was obvious that God was present.

**First** there was a mighty wind, filling the house they were in.

**Second**, flames could be seen over the heads of the disciples, but they were not burned up.

**Third**, they began speaking in the languages of each of the foreigners who were gathered in Jerusalem for the celebration of Pentecost, a Jewish festival remembering God bringing them into the promised land. They spoke of the savior Jesus Christ and how to be saved.

Onlookers that day said the disciples are drunk in the morning. But many others heard the gospel of Jesus Christ preached in their own language with no interpreter, and believed in Jesus as Savior and became Christians that day because of the Holy Spirit.

**Hey, you are not an accident.** You are not here today by random act. If you are hearing the gospel of Jesus (the good news of God) **then you** were meant to be here by God’s Holy Spirit!

You can choose to call His presence a random act of craziness by a Methodist preacher, **OR** you can open yourself to the possibility that God is real, that God is here today and that God’s Holy Spirit wants to use you to further God’s kingdom here on earth for real. (we pray “your kingdom come, on earth as in heaven.”

How can that prayer be real? Through the Holy Spirit working in you.

Here is what happens when the Holy Spirit is at work in you:

* You have new, supernatural power to do God’s work
* You understand the Bible when you read and study it, alone and with others
* You have a direct connection to God when you pray
* You feel comfort and healing in your body and soul when you pray
* You are guided by God in your daily work and life

Today, I am focusing on just one of the phrases Jesus used to describe the Holy Spirit:

**Spirit of Truth.** To pneuma tēs alētheias

["Aletheia" is the Greek name for "Truth". It is variously translated as "unconcealedness", "disclosure", "revealing", or "unclosedness". The literal meaning of the word ἀ – λήθ εια is "the state of not being hidden; the state of being evident." It also means factuality or reality. In Greek, the promised Helper is called "the Spirit of the Truth".](https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=f59fd193930cf7d8e86df29907f43be08ffbd7cbbd3498196b6e8fba0c151079JmltdHM9MTc0NzUyNjQwMA&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=4&fclid=26277bd5-0e4c-66d4-2177-6e640f406788&psq=spirit+of+truth+in+greek&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly9uYW1lc2ZvcmdvZC5uZXQvc3Bpcml0LW9mLXRydXRoLw&ntb=1)

When we hear something that seems off: a belief, idea or action, our ***common sense*** and ***intuition*** can help us know right from wrong. However, these ways of knowing truth are fallible, because what is common may not be what God wants and what seems right genuinely wrong. Also, ***the stain of sin*** affects our thinking and can ***“sear our conscience like a hot iron.”*** (I Timothy 4:2)

Thank God we have the Holy Spirit to lead us, guide us and show us the truth in all situations. The first step of life in the Spirit is trusting that Spirit is God, and God will lead us into all truth.

We are currently in a social environment where **truth is under fire**. We get confused at all the accusations of “fake news” and we do not know where to turn. Hello! We have the Spirit of Truth.

***17This is the Spirit of truth,*** *whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.*

***25****‘I have said these things to you while I am still with you.****26****But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will* ***teach you everything, and remind you*** *of all that I have said to you.*

To get closer to God’s way of living we must trust the Holy Spirit is always right and is always there to lead us.

**I John 4 *1****Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world.****2****By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,****3****and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. And this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming; and now it is already in the world.****4****Little children, you are from God, and have conquered them; for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.****5****They are from the world; therefore what they say is from the world, and the world listens to them.****6****We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us, and whoever is not from God does not listen to us. From this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.* ***7****Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.****8****Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.*

Truth is not relative to how we feel or what we think, but is rooted in God, demonstrated through Jesus and confirmed by the Holy Spirit to believers. If something **sounds too good to be godly,** it probably is. Christians do not need to be deceived.

How then? How can we tap into the power, the presence, the guidance, comfort and leading of the Holy Spirit of God?

How do we access the SPIRIT OF TRUTH?

We began with a proverb today:

***Proverbs 2:1-8***

***3****if you indeed cry out for insight,  
    and raise your voice for understanding;****4****if you seek it like silver,  
    and search for it as for hidden treasures—****5****then you will understand the fear of the Lord  
    and find the knowledge of God.*

Jesus said it this way: *“Seek first the Kingdom (reign) of God, and all these things will be added to you.”*

Practically speaking,

Work as though it all depends on you, then:

Pray as though it all depends on God.

**Work:** **Study.** (2 Tim. 15) **15**Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

**Pray:** **Believe that God can do** ***20****…immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us….* Romans 3

This stunning feat made Charles Blondin famous in the summer of 1859.  He walked 160 feet above the falls several times back and forth between Canada and the United States as huge crowds on both sides looked on with shock and awe.  Once he crossed in a sack, once on stilts, another time on a bicycle,  and once he even carried a stove and cooked an omelet!

On July 15, Blondin walked backward across the tightrope to Canada and returned pushing a wheelbarrow.  
  
The Blondin story is told that it was after pushing a wheelbarrow across while blindfolded that Blondin asked for some audience participation.  The crowds had watched and "Ooooohed" and "Aaaaahed!"  He had proven that he could do it; of that, there was no doubt.  But now he was asking for a volunteer to get into the wheelbarrow and take a ride across the Falls with him!

It is said that he asked his audience, "Do you believe I can carry a person across in this wheelbarrow?"  Of course the crowd shouted that yes, they believed!

It was then that Blondin posed the question - "Who will get in the wheelbarrow?'

Of course...none did.

Later in August of 1859, his manager, Harry Colcord, did ride on Blondin's back across the Falls.)