

ABIDE IN THE SPIRIT

IPHC WOMEN'S MINISTRIES HAS BEEN CELEBRATING WOMEN'S MINISTRIES DAY FOR DECADES. WE SET ASIDE ONE SUNDAY PER YEAR, USUALLY IN THE MONTH OF MARCH, AND ENCOURAGE PASTORS AND CHURCHES TO HONOR AND CELEBRATE THE WOMEN OF THEIR CHURCH. THIS TEACHING CAN SERVE AS AN OPTION FOR WHAT YOU SHARE WITH THE WOMEN OF YOUR CHURCH AS WE FOCUS ON ABIDING IN THE SPIRIT.

Lesson adapted from The In-Between Unit 6

THE APOSTLE PAUL FOUND HIMSELF IN THE GREAT CITY OF ATHENS, READY TO PRESENT HIS CASE FOR CHRIST TO THE PHILOSOPHERS, THE RELIGIOUS, AND THE INTELLIGENT OF THE ANCIENT WORLD. IN ACTS 17:22-31, PAUL USED HIS WORDS OF PERSUASION AND INTELLECT TO IMPRESS HIS LISTENERS. HE REFERRED TO THEIR GODS AND EVEN THE ALTAR OF THE UNKNOWN GOD WITH THE INTENT OF POINTING THE CROWD TOWARD JESUS. FASCINATINGLY, ONLY A FEW PEOPLE BECAME FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST, AND HE DID NOT ESTABLISH A CHURCH IN ATHENS. IT WAS NOT A FAILURE, BUT IT WAS A LESSON LEARNED BY PAUL.

IN THE VERY NEXT CHAPTER, PAUL ENTERS CORINTH. HIS APPROACH IS DIFFERENT THIS TIME, AND WE CAN SEE THE DIFFERENCE IN HIS WORDS TO THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH IN HIS FIRST LETTER. IN I CORINTHIANS 2:1-5, PAUL WRITES, "AND I, BRETHERN, WHEN I CAME TO YOU, DID NOT COME WITH EXCELLENCE OF SPEECH, OR OF WISDOM DECLARING TO THE TESTIMONY OF GOD. FOR I DETERMINED NOT TO KNOW ANYTHING AMONG YOU EXCEPT JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED. I WAS WITH YOU IN WEAKNESS, IN FEAR, AND IN MUCH TREMBLING. AND MY SPEECH AND MY PREACHING WERE NOT WITH PERSUASIVE WORDS OF HUMAN WISDOM, BUT IN DEMONSTRATION OF THE SPIRIT AND OF POWER, THAT YOUR FAITH SHOULD BE IN THE WISDOM OF MEN, BUT IN THE POWER OF GOD".

PAUL RECOGNIZED THAT HE COULD NOT RELY UPON, ABIDE WITHIN, OR TRUST IN HIS OWN ABILITY, STYLE, EDUCATION, BACKGROUND, OR SKILL SET. HE LEARNED THAT HE MUST DEPEND UPON, ABIDE WITHIN, AND TRUST THE HOLY SPIRIT TO DO THE WORK.

PAUL RECOGNIZED THAT HE COULD NOT RELY UPON, ABIDE WITHIN, OR TRUST IN HIS OWN ABILITY, STYLE, EDUCATION, BACKGROUND, OR SKILL SET. HE LEARNED THAT HE MUST DEPEND UPON, ABIDE WITHIN, AND TRUST THE HOLY SPIRIT TO DO THE WORK.

ABIDE IN THE SPIRIT

I. ABIDING IN THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVE US POWER.

ACTS 1:8 SAYS, "BUT YOU SHALL RECEIVE POWER WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS COME UPON YOU AND YOU SHALL BE WITNESSES TO ME IN JERUSALEM, AND IN ALL JUDEA AND SAMARIA, AND TO THE END OF THE EARTH."

WOULD YOU RATHER BE WITHOUT RUNNING WATER OR WITHOUT ELECTRICITY IN YOUR HOME FOR A WEEK? MOST WOULD RATHER HAVE ELECTRICITY AND GO WITHOUT WATER. WHY? BECAUSE WE NEED OUR PHONES, COMPUTERS, TVS, INTERNET/WI-FI, AND DEVICES TO HAVE POWER.

THIS ELECTRONIC WORLD FUNCTIONS BY POWER. WITHOUT POWER TO OUR DEVICES, PEOPLE WOULD BE DISCONNECTED AND DISENGAGED FROM WHAT IS CURRENTLY HAPPENING IN THE WORLD. OUR POWERED DEVICES ALLOW US TO WATCH ONLINE VIDEOS, RECEIVE BREAKING NEWS, CHECK THE CURRENT SCORE OF OUR FAVORITE TEAM, DISCOVER THE RECENT RISE AND FALL OF THE STOCK MARKET, AND MUCH MORE WITHOUT WAITING UNTIL THE NEWSPAPER IS PRINTED OR THE LATE LOCAL NEWSCAST IS ON. IT IS POWER THAT MAKES THAT HAPPEN.

IN THE SPIRITUAL CONTEXT, THE CHRISTIAN ALSO NEEDS POWER. WE NEED TO REMAIN CONNECTED TO THE POWER SOURCE, THE HOLY SPIRIT. JESUS PROMISED WE WOULD RECEIVE POWER WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES UPON US. THIS POWER IS TO HELP US BECOME GREATER WITNESSES FOR CHRIST. LIKE PAUL, WE DO NOT HAVE TO RELY ON PERSUASIVE WORDS OR EXCELLENT SPEECH ON THE CONTRARY, WE MUST RELY ON THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE DEMONSTRATION OF HIS POWER.

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, GOD SPEAKS TO ZERUBBABEL THROUGH THE PROPHET ZECHARIAH. ZERUBBABEL WAS DETERMINED TO REBUILD THE TEMPLE. UNFORTUNATELY, ZERUBBABEL WAS CAUGHT IN DISCOURAGEMENT, FEAR, AND DISTRACTION. THINGS WERE NOT GOING AS EXPECTED, AND THE WORK WAS AT A STANDSTILL. PEOPLE HAD LEFT THE WORK OF THE TEMPLE AND BEGAN TO WORK ON THEIR OWN HOUSES. THEY HAD EVEN GOTTEN COMFORTABLE WITH THE FACT THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD WAS NOT BEING BUILT. SOME WERE SAYING, "PUT IT OFF TO THE NEXT GENERATION." BUT THE PROPHET HAD A WORD FOR ZERUBBABEL THAT HE WOULD BUILD THE TEMPLE, BUT IT WOULD NOT BE "BY MIGHT, NOR BY POWER, BUT BY MY SPIRIT SAYS THE LORD OF HOSTS" (ZECHARIAH 4:6). ZERUBBABEL, LIKE PAUL, LEARNED THAT HE NEEDED THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT TO ACCOMPLISH GREAT THINGS. AND SO DO WE!

ABIDE IN THE SPIRIT

II. ABIDING IN THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVES US AN ADVANTAGE.

READ JOHN 16:7 "NEVERTHELESS I TELL YOU THE TRUTH. IT IS TO YOUR ADVANTAGE THAT I GO AWAY FOR IF I DO NOT GO AWAY, THE HELPER WILL NOT COME TO YOU BUT IF I DEPART, I WILL SEND HIM TO YOU".

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE AN ADVANTAGE? IF YOU HAD AN ADVANTAGE, WOULD YOU USE IT? IF YOU HAVE EVER USED COUPONS OR BEEN A BARGAIN SHOPPER, THEN YOU MAY UNDERSTAND THIS EXAMPLE: OFTEN, WOMEN USE A WEBSITE OR YOUTUBE CHANNEL TO GIVE THEM ALL THE SECRETS OF HOW TO GET THEIR TOILETRIES FOR FREE BY COUPONING AND USING BENEFITS OFFERED BY YOUR LOCAL PHARMACY. IT'S A "CHEAT CODE" FOR GETTING PRODUCTS FOR FREE OR AT A VERY LOW COST. YOU AREN'T ACTUALLY CHEATING, BUT IT IS TO YOUR ADVANTAGE TO UTILIZE THE WISDOM OFFERED FOR YOUR FINANCIAL BENEFIT.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE CHRISTIAN'S ADVANTAGE. JESUS MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE HAD TO GO BACK TO THE FATHER. HIS WORK ON THE CROSS WAS COMPLETE. JESUS DEFEATED DEATH, AND HIS RESURRECTION HAS PROVIDED THE WAY FOR US TO HAVE LIFE AND LIFE MORE ABUNDANTLY (JOHN 10:10). AS JESUS ASCENDS TO HEAVEN, HE SENDS THE HOLY SPIRIT TO DESCEND ON US. JESUS GAVE US OUR ADVANTAGE. IT IS TO OUR ADVANTAGE THAT WE TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE ADVANTAGE THAT JESUS GAVE TO US! WHAT IS THE ADVANTAGE?

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS OUR HELPER (JOHN 14:15, JOHN 16:7)

WE HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHO CAN HELP US IN OUR TIME OF NEED. HE IS OUR COMPANION AND HELPS US WITH OUR CIRCUMSTANCES AND TROUBLES. HE PROVIDES WISDOM AND INSIGHT WHEN WE ARE STUCK OR UNSURE. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS AVAILABLE TO HELP US IN EVERYTHING THAT WE DO. IT IS TO OUR ADVANTAGE TO SEEK HELP FROM THE HELPER.

ABIDE IN THE SPIRIT

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS OUR TEACHER

(JOHN 14:26)

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS NOT LIKE A TEACHER IN THE CLASSROOM WITH A CHALKBOARD AND A GRADE BOOK, HOPING THAT YOU FAIL THE CLASS. ON THE CONTRARY, THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE BEST TEACHER AND SHOULD BE OUR FAVORITE TEACHER BECAUSE THIS TEACHER WANTS WHAT IS BEST FOR OUR LIVES. THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL TEACH YOU ALL THINGS, INSTRUCT YOU ON HOW TO LIVE, HOW TO HANDLE DIFFICULT TIMES, HOW TO LOVE YOUR SPOUSE, HOW TO DISCIPLINE YOUR CHILDREN, HOW TO BE A BOSS, HOW TO MAKE AND MANAGE MONEY, HOW TO MINISTER TO THE BROKEN, HOW TO LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR, AND SO MUCH MORE. HE IS THE ULTIMATE TEACHER WITH INFINITE KNOWLEDGE. IT IS TO OUR ADVANTAGE TO BE TAUGHT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

(JOHN 14:16-17, JOHN 15:26)

IN A WORLD WHERE EVERYONE HAS THEIR OWN TRUTH, WE NEED THE HOLY SPIRIT TO HELP US KNOW THE TRUTH. YES, THERE IS ONLY ONE TRUTH. JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE (JOHN 14:6). THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL LEAD YOU TO ALL TRUTH AND PROTECT YOU FROM THE FALSE RELIGIONS AND LIES OF THE WORLD. HIS TRUTH DOES NOT LEAD TO CONFUSION OR HOPELESSNESS. HIS TRUTH LEADS TO LIFE EVERLASTING. HAVING THE HOLY SPIRIT LEAD US TO TRUTH IS TO OUR ADVANTAGE.

III. ABIDING IN THE HOLY SPIRIT PRESERVES US IN THE KINGDOM

READ ALOUD ROMANS 14:17 "FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NOT A MATTER OF EATING AND DRINKING, BUT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, PEACE, AND JOY IN THE HOLY SPIRIT."

AS FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST, WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT WE ARE PART OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HAVE A ROLE WITHIN THE KINGDOM.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS MADE UP OF SEVERAL COMPONENTS:
A KING, THE KING'S STANDARD - RULES OR LAW, CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM.

ABIDE IN THE SPIRIT

THE KING HAS A WAY THAT HE WANTS HIS PEOPLE TO LIVE WITHIN THE KINGDOM.

THROUGHOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT, GOD GAVE THE PEOPLE OF GOD (ISRAEL) A LIST OF RULES OR COMMANDMENTS: THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AND THE REST OF THE LAW. THESE RULES INCLUDED HOW PEOPLE WORSHIPPED GOD, INTERACTED WITH OTHERS, AND CONDUCTED THEMSELVES WITHIN THE KINGDOM, EVEN DOWN TO WHAT THEY WERE ALLOWED TO EAT.

IN THE BOOK OF ROMANS, THE APOSTLE PAUL POINTS OUT THAT THE KINGDOM IS MORE THAN FOLLOWING RULES. THE KINGDOM HAS A SET OF STANDARDS, YES. HOWEVER, JUST FOLLOWING THOSE STANDARDS DOES NOT CHANGE A PERSON. THE TRANSFORMATION TAKES PLACE THROUGH THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

PAUL STATES THAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD...IS RIGHTEOUSNESS, PEACE, AND JOY IN THE HOLY SPIRIT. THE HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERS US TO LIVE BY THE KING'S STANDARD.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

TO BE RIGHTEOUS - MEANS THAT WE ARE IN THE RIGHT STANDING. OF COURSE, THERE ARE MANY INTERPRETATIONS OF WHAT RIGHT STANDING MEANS. IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, JESUS CONFRONTED THOSE WHO THOUGHT THAT THEY WERE IN RIGHT STANDING. THE RELIGIOUS. JESUS CALLED THE RELIGIOUS PEOPLE - WHITEWASHED TOMBS. THEY LOOKED GOOD, BUT NOTHING WAS ALIVE OR GROWING WITHIN THEM.

JOHN 16:8 STATES, "AND WHEN HE (THE HOLY SPIRIT) HAS COME, HE WILL CONVICT THE WORLD OF SIN, AND OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND OF JUDGMENT."

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS TO POINT PEOPLE TO CHRIST. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE KEY COMPONENT TO SALVATION. THE SPIRIT MOVES PEOPLE TOWARD CHRIST. THE HOLY SPIRIT CONVICTS US. THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL CONVICT YOU OF WRONGFUL AND SINFUL ACTIONS. WE NEED HOLY SPIRIT CONVICTION IN OUR LIVES. WE MUST BE THANKFUL THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT IS WILLING TO GET UP IN OUR BUSINESS. WHY? WE OFTEN THINK WE ARE RIGHTEOUS BECAUSE OF OUR ACTIONS (GOING TO CHURCH, GIVING MONEY, ETC.) OR OUR NON-ACTIONS (DON'T DRINK, DON'T SMOKE, ETC.), AND THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL POINT US TO REPENTANCE AND EMPOWER US TO BE LIKE CHRIST.

ABIDE IN THE SPIRIT

PEACE

"BUT THE COMFORTER, WHICH IS THE HOLY GHOST, WHOM THE FATHER WILL SEND IN MY NAME, HE SHALL TEACH YOU ALL THINGS, AND BRING ALL THINGS TO YOUR REMEMBRANCE, WHATSOEVER I HAVE SAID UNTO YOU." JOHN 14:26.

AS FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST, WE WILL NOT ALWAYS BE CELEBRATING ON THE MOUNTAINTOP. THERE ARE VALLEYS AND DIFFICULT DAYS, SO WE NEED THE HOLY SPIRIT TO COMFORT US AND BRING US PEACE AMID OUR TRIALS. THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVES US PEACE IN OUR MOST DANGEROUS STORMS. A HURRICANE IS A DESTRUCTIVE STORM THAT CAN CAUSE DAMAGE AND LOSS. WE OFTEN CAN RELATE TO STORMS DURING DIFFICULT TIMES: A STRUGGLING MARRIAGE, HARDSHIPS WITH OUR CHILDREN, JOBS, MONEY, ANXIETY, ETC.

KNOWING THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT IS WITH US IN GOOD AND DIFFICULT TIMES IS COMFORTING. THE HOLY SPIRIT PROVIDES US PEACE WITH GOD (RIGHTEOUSNESS) AND THE PEACE OF GOD (COMFORT).

JOY IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE CHALLENGE IS NOT TO CONFUSE HAPPINESS WITH JOY. THERE IS A DIFFERENCE. THE SCRIPTURE DID NOT SAY, "HAPPINESS IN THE HOLY SPIRIT." HAPPINESS IS AN EMOTION. IT TENDS TO BE EXTERNALLY TRIGGERED AND IS USUALLY BASED ON PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS. THOSE PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS CAN MAKE YOU HAPPY. AS QUICKLY AS THEY EXCITE YOU, THOSE SAME PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS CAN CAUSE ANGER, SADNESS, AND HURT.

IN A BIBLICAL CONTEXT, JOY IS NOT AN EMOTION BUT AN ATTITUDE OF THE HEART AND MIND. JOY IS BEING IN A STATE OF FULFILLMENT EVEN WHEN THE THINGS AROUND YOU ARE CHALLENGING. JOY IS NOT BASED ON EXTERNAL EVENTS OR PEOPLE, BUT RATHER, IT IS BASED ON THE INTERNAL REFUGE AND SECURITY YOU HAVE IN CHRIST. WITH THIS JOY, YOU ARE NOT MOVED OR SHAKEN BY THE DAY'S EVENTS OR THE PEOPLE WHO COME AND GO IN YOUR LIFE. THIS JOY SUPERSEDES OUR FALLEN WORLD BECAUSE THIS JOY DOES NOT COME FROM THE THINGS OF THIS WORLD.

IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD, OUR JOY IS IN THE HOLY SPIRIT. AS WE ABIDE IN THE SPIRIT, WE WILL HAVE RIGHTEOUSNESS, PEACE, AND JOY AMID A FALLEN AND BROKEN WORLD. THIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ALLOWS US TO WALK UPRIGHTLY AND LIVE ABOVE REPROACH. THIS PEACE WILL ENABLE US TO FACE ANOTHER DAY, EVEN AFTER A TRAGEDY OR DISAPPOINTMENT. IT IS THIS JOY THAT ALLOWS US TO BE A WITNESS TO THOSE WHO HAVE NO HOPE. ABIDING IN THE SPIRIT KEEPS US IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD.