

# Spirit + Word

BY JESSICA DEWITT

*“For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”*

## **Ephesians 3:14–19 (NIV)**

Dutiful. That’s how I would say I approached the Bible for years. After all, every Christian must read his or her Bible, it’s what we are supposed to do (that’s how I interpreted things as a young person growing up in the church, anyway). So, mainly because I felt like it was what I should do, reading the Bible became a regular agenda item, something that was on the daily “to do” list.

Being in the Word was, if I’m being honest, mostly something just to get done and scratch off that checklist.

### **A SHIFT**

After some time, I began to understand why being in the Bible was important.

In those God-spoken words I gained perspective when I wasn’t sure what to do next, felt encouraged when stressed and upset, and learned more about the God I followed and His holy ways. I met Him there as my Rock and Savior and Friend. I was still dutiful in my Bible study times, but now there was meaning to it.

In some seasons of life, it was a time I looked forward to, a refuge amidst the challenges and pain that come in a fallen world.



In other seasons, though I felt spiritually as dry as a desert, I showed up anyway in faith, praying for His renewal and refreshment once again. Regardless of the season, I pressed on, knowing it to be good and essential and worthwhile.

Years later, I found myself in a disconcerting place.

## THE HUNGER FOR MORE

Vigilant in my Bible time, yet feeling entirely unsatisfied. I felt stuck in a place of mediocrity, of lukewarm-ness. A place where I was doing everything “right” (going to church, praying, reading the Word), but where I felt no closer to Him regardless of these efforts. There had to be more, I knew there had to be more. More of Him, more to my faith, more to living a life with and in Him. But I was doing everything right so why didn’t I have it? Where was the elusive “more”? Must I be in a dark or hard place to know and hear Him more clearly, as I had previously experienced? Or could I taste more of Him regularly in normal life?

Finally, I couldn’t stand it any longer; the tepidness drove me to my knees in a whole new way. It was there that I told God in no uncertain terms that I wanted more of His Spirit in me and in my life. I declared to Him that I was done with the boring, dutiful faith walk, and that I truly, truly wanted more of Him, regardless of what that meant and what that might look like: I was all in. I didn’t mince any words, and I was completely, utterly terrified.

This was a prayer that required complete surrender (the first hard part), and furthermore, I wasn’t unaware of the risk I was taking (the second hard part). Our God is a big God, He is immense, not to mention awesome and powerful and, in some ways, unpredictable. I realized that this had the potential to lead to some major consequences. At the same time, I couldn’t stay in that spiritually stale place. I didn’t know what He would do with my submission, but I knew I had to give it all to Him so that He could do something new, something outside my current understanding of how to grow in Him.



## A NEW DAY

The day I asked for more and yielded myself to His will regarding that (whatever it might mean for me) was completely innocuous, completely normal. There was silence after I prayed, and the day continued on in typical fashion. But I knew I had prayed a dangerous prayer, and I anxiously awaited His response. After that kind of heartfelt surrender, surely God would do something.

No grand moment came. Yet, the promise of “if you seek Me, I will be found” remained (1 Chronicles 28:9, Jeremiah 29:13, James 4:8-11, 2 Chronicles 15:2, Psalm 9:10, to name a few). Then quietly, ever so quietly, God began to move. And then, not so quietly, He began to shake things up in my life, and stir things up within me. Life-long fears and issues began to surface in order to be addressed and healed, His Spirit gave the Word a fresh vibrancy and forcefulness, and He revealed Himself to me anew. He removed that which prevented growth, and reignited and re-taught me truth known but not fully understood.

It was as if He took all the wonderful knowledge I had collected over the years and made it come alive; my cerebral understanding was finally connected and applied in a fuller way to my heart. I started perceiving, and believing, that He sees me as His beloved.

I learned how He desires and delights in me, and that He wants the same in return; He yearns for an intimate relationship with me. Essentially, His Spirit invaded and remade me. Not only did I comprehend more of His perspective and His heart, He changed my own; my heart became His in a way I didn't realize was possible, even though I had accepted Christ as my Savior long ago. John 4:24 tells us that “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.” I've learned since that initial prayer for “more” that while I had been strong in the Word and in truth, I hadn't been as strong in my time with, and my understanding of, the Spirit.

Yes, I always knew and believed His Spirit was in me as His follower (He is in all of us once we accept Christ as Savior and Lord). I knew He was a seal, a deposit of what was to come in eternity (Heaven). And I knew He was continually working, helping me and changing me to be more like Christ (sanctifying me). I knew He was the Counselor and Helper.



I knew all this about Him, but I didn't know Him.

For example, I did Bible times where I would read and choose a verse to land on for the day, but I never took the time to ask Him to guide me where to read or ask what He would have me learn from that scripture. I would pray without ever asking Him who I should be praying for, and I would talk to God without listening for His response.

In daily life, I didn't pause to ask for discernment or His direction about whatever was going on in that moment. I believed He was always present and working, but I never made space for Him to lead and guide and teach me in a direct way.

Of course, the Spirit had been leading and guiding and teaching me all the while, it's not that He hadn't; indeed, it was He who brought me to that prayer of yearning and surrender. **God is not blocked by our lack of intentionality towards Him, and He is always working in and with us.** That's His promise to us, and He is always faithful in fulfilling His promises (Phil. 1:6, Psalm 138:8, and so on).

## BEING INTENTIONAL

I have come to see, however, that He is willing to be with us more potently if we will only ask and invite Him to be, if we will be intentional in giving the Spirit time, attention, and space to move and speak and direct. This might be obvious to you who are more mature in the faith, but I'm willing to guess that there are some like me, those who are doing everything "right" but still feel like their faith walk is stagnant, their understanding and knowing of God limited or dry.

If this resonates with you, you know what I'm talking about, and you hunger for Him, then I encourage you to go to Him with that. Go to Him unsatisfied and tell Him it is only He who can satisfy your soul hunger, and that you want more of Him.

If that's really what you want, He will answer.



Jesus says in Luke 11:9,

*“And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone; or if he asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a snake; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”*

The Lord’s answer to you probably won’t be instantaneous or come in a dramatic fashion, but He will respond to a sincere request for more of Him.

If you aren’t in a spiritually dry place, the amazing fact remains that there is always more of Him to be had; He is infinite, there is always more of Him to know and understand. Someday, we will spend all eternity fully getting to know our hugely awesome, incredible Lord and God -- if that were even possible.

## RESPONSE

So, wherever you are in your faith walk, whatever season you are in, I encourage you to seek Him anew, with a sense of excitement and expectation. Ask for a greater hunger and thirst for Him. Carve out the time and be intentional in letting His Spirit guide you. **Put Him first, lay yourself down, and let Him be God of your life.**

**Because He is worth it!**

I have tasted and I have seen and I can testify that there is nothing like walking by and with the Spirit. He is awesome and good and loving, and, miraculously, He wants to reveal Himself in ever-increasing measure to you.

Will you ask? Will you seek? Will you knock?

Your Father is waiting for you, waiting for you to step forward in faith, ready and willing to give you more! How will you respond?



*Reflections*

Lined area for reflections.

*Prayer*

Lined area for prayer.

