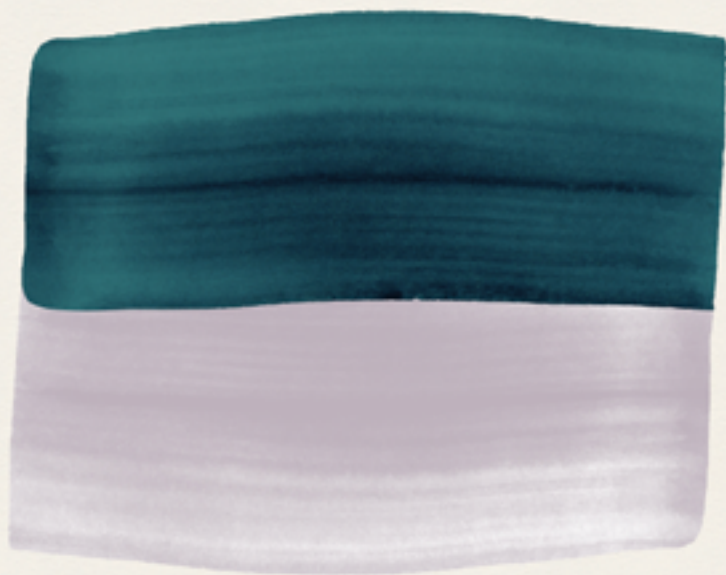


QUICK THEOLOGY

How to Walk By the Spirit



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Introduction

What does it look like to walk by the Holy Spirit?

Maybe you've grown up in the church and you've heard people say, "You just need to walk by the Spirit, or rely on the Holy Spirit." Or maybe, you grew up in a church environment where the Holy Spirit wasn't talked about at all.

Or, here's your third option—maybe you grew up around a church environment where the Holy Spirit only did things that were highly sensational, or emotional, or "showy-like." You may have known that He healed and He prophesied through people—but did you ever learn the daily power of the Holy Spirit-led life?

If not, I hope this book is helpful to you. Now, there are much smarter people than me who have talked about this issue. But, as usual, here at Every Woman A Theologian, my goal is to distill down the information that these wise teachers and scholars have produced into

an easy-to-digest format.

In this book, we're going to get a really high-level look at pneumatology—or the theology of the Holy Spirit—as it is applied to our daily lives, and answer the question: “What does it look like to walk by the Spirit?”

My dad grew up in the Assemblies of God tradition. If you're not familiar with the AG, it is a Pentecostal tradition. So, there's some pretty heavy emphasis on the Holy Spirit's gifts—but not always an emphasis on the practical outworking of the Holy Spirit in your life.

I believe that it was an advantage that my father grew up in this way, though. When he became a Christian and when he matured in his faith, he had this theology of the Holy Spirit from childhood that he translated to us in a tangible way. I can confidently say that this influenced my walk as I matured.

When I became a believer at 15 years old, I became immediately very zealous. I wanted to do my walk “right,” and immediately dove into memorization of the fruits of the Spirit and all of the righteous behaviors that I believed I was supposed to be doing.

I would read these lists of Christian behaviors, and I would go to my summer job or about my day—trying to muscle my way through on my own strength.

I distinctly remember my dad telling me: “*Phy, it's*

not that hard. It's not that complicated. You're making this harder than it needs to be." I remember getting so physically angry at my dad for saying this, I can almost feel it now. Later into adulthood, I thought back to this time and questioned the source of my anger.

I believe that I was so frustrated because the very concept of letting go felt so absurd to me. I was like, *"Well, then what am I supposed to do? Like, what is my job here? How can I possibly walk MY walk if I can't muscle my way into being patient, joyful, kind, or loving? Isn't that what we're supposed to be doing?"*

When he said that to me, I felt a deep sense of loss. At the same time, I realized I needed to figure out what my next step looked like. The process of refinement in this area took years for me—but it allowed me to understand what the Holy Spirit's role was, and what my role was in producing the fruit of the Spirit.

As Jesus said in Matthew 7: *"You will know them by their fruits"* My dad laid this foundational belief in our family, constantly reminding us that we needed to let go and allow the Holy Spirit to be the one to develop our fruits. However, practically speaking, I still had to walk that road of figuring out what that looked like in my life.

My guess is you've probably had a few of those realizations on your own.



Theology of the Spirit

In these next few pages, I hope to shortcut a little of that journey for you in a way that impacts your spiritual walk—or at least maybe make a light bulb go off in your own understanding of what it means to walk by the Spirit.

To do that, I want to talk about why we need a biblical pneumatology in the first place.

All through scripture, we see the Holy Spirit. He is not something “new” that arrives in the New Testament. His indwelling of believers is a new manifestation of Him, or a new dispensation of who He is. But He has always been here.

But how do we know this?

Well, Genesis 1 tells us that “*The Spirit of God hovered over the surface of the deep over the waters.*”. It also says throughout the Old Testament that the Holy Spirit would come upon people to strengthen them to certain

tasks, or to give them what they needed to minister or to prophesy.

Some great examples of this are what we see with Elijah and Elisha, where Elisha prayed for a double portion of the Holy Spirit that Elijah had. Additionally, in the New Testament, we see that Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to every believer. This is explicitly stated in Acts 2, where we see the promise that “*The Holy Spirit comes upon the believers in power.*”

And so, at this point in the timeline every Christian has the indwelling Holy Spirit to empower them. He helps us to walk out the will of God, actively seeking sanctification in the image of Christ. He comforts us, to convicts us, and helps to transform us—empowering us to be a “city on a hill” and a light in this dark world.

We can’t do this on our own strength. We can’t make ourselves into the image of God on earth. We can’t cultivate virtue, or righteousness, or impact that lasts eternally without Christ through the Holy Spirit.

The good things that we see done in the world by those who don’t follow God are often done from a place of good-intentioned striving and “muscling through.”

The result?

Excruciatingly long days fueled by anxiety, anguish, and overwhelm.

I often think of the memoirs and biographies I've read about politicians or people who accomplished huge world-changing things, but who didn't follow the Lord. You'll clearly see the state of complete unrest or the state of utter exhaustion as a result—and it becomes clear how little we are able to actually do on our own.

That's not to say that Christians don't go through exhaustion (because we do!) However, there's no power of the Holy Spirit behind those who try to change the world using their own strength.

For the Christian, there should be an ability to cultivate virtue from a place of peace and freedom, even in the midst of suffering.

When we're wondering what it means to walk by the Spirit, we can rest assured that there's only one real answer: Only what God asks me to do, I do.

To walk by the Holy Spirit is to walk to live in obedience to the voice of God. It really is that simple!

To determine what obedience looks like in context, consider asking yourself: What is God asking me to do in this moment? What is God asking me to do in this month, week, year? Am I going to obey Him in that area?

Before we get to the encouragement I have for you as you learn to walk by the Spirit, I want to read a couple of quotes about the Holy Spirit from some of my

favorite authors that I have found to be clarifying and encouraging.

This first one is from Dwight Moody (or D. L. Moody), where he states:

“There is no use running before you are sent; there is no use in attempting to do God’s work without God’s power. A man working without this unction, a man working without this anointing, a man working without the Holy Ghost upon him, is losing time after all.”

What I love about this is not just the “guts” of what it says—because it’s so true and so good—but that Francis Schaeffer said almost the exact same thing, confirming this concept in the context of a Christian life.

This is a little bit of a longer quote, but it’s worth noting:

“Though we today are immediately indwelt by the Holy Spirit when we accept Christ as Savior, being indwelt is not the same as having the fullness of the power of the Holy Spirit. The disciples had to wait to receive the Spirit at Pentecost. Christians today are to follow the same order to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit at salvation, and

to know something of the reality of the power of Christ through the agency of the Holy Spirit. And then to work and witness. The order cannot be reversed. There are to be many fillings. Doing the Lord's work in the Lord's way is not a matter of being saved and then simply working hard. After Jesus ascended, the disciples waited quietly in prayer for the coming of His Spirit.

Their first motion was not toward activism. They didn't subscribe to the thought process of, "Christ has risen—now let us be busy." Though they looked at the world with Christ's compassion and zeal, they obeyed His clear command to wait before they witnessed. If we who are Christians and therefore indwelt by the Spirit are to preach to our generation with tongues of fire, we also must have something more than an activism which men can easily duplicate. We must know something of the power of the Holy Spirit."

Moody and Schaefer are essentially saying the same thing. We cannot achieve what God has asked us to achieve in this world, apart from the power of the

Holy Spirit. This gives us a specific equipping done through the Holy Spirit for the tasks he has called us to do—whether those tasks are discipling our children, or ministering from a stage, or talking to our neighbor about the Lord.



We Need the Holy Spirit

No matter what God has called us to do, we need the Holy Spirit to actively lead us to do it. We also need to have to have a heart posture that is willing to listen to Him, because that is, in essence, what it means to walk by the Spirit.

To really grasp what this looks like in the context of our own lives, we're going to look at the most famous passage that talks about walking in the Spirit, Galatians 5:16-25. It says:

"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh—for these are opposed to each other to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.