

Learning To Move In the Power of the Kingdom

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Luke 3 and 4

God's Empowering Presence

Now, throughout this series, I have repeated a few basic assertions; one of which is that much of the church today in America is only doctrinally Trinitarian. By that I mean that much of the church in America has as part of its creed, as part of its fundamental doctrinal statement, that the name of God and Christianity is "Trinity." That is, after all, the Christian name for God. You are not a Christian if you do not believe that God is a Trinity, one God subsisting in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Our basic understanding of God is God in three persons, blessed Trinity.

But much of the church today knows virtually nothing about the Holy Spirit. Nor has any relationship to the Holy Spirit that could be expressed or could be meaningfully articulated. God, the Father, we understand a little bit. God, the Son (namely Jesus), we understand a bit more. But God, the Holy Spirit, we understand not at all. And many people have been taught to be afraid of the Holy Spirit. And suspicious of talk about the Holy Spirit, despite the fact that the Old and New Testament mentions the work of the Holy Spirit hundreds and hundreds of times.

Now, here is a thought for you. Do you know that the Holy Spirit is the communicator, the mediator of every Kingdom blessing that God wishes to give to you? The Holy Spirit is the agent. Let me put it a different way. Do you realize that apart from the Holy Spirit, you experience nothing of God's Kingdom? Every single thing that God does in this world is through the Holy Spirit. It is through the Holy Spirit that you are convicted of your sins. John 16:7-8, "When he comes [referring to the Holy Spirit] he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness because I am going to the Father where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment because the prince of this world now stands condemned." It is through the Holy Spirit that you are convicted of your sins.

It is through the Holy Spirit that you are guided into the truth. "When he, the Spirit of truth, comes (John 6:13) he will guide you into all truth." It is through the Holy Spirit that you believe. It is through the Holy Spirit that the church can obtain unity. It is through the Holy Spirit that the church is flung out in missions. It is through the Holy Spirit that the church heals. It is through the Holy Spirit that we serve. You can name nothing that we, as believers, obtain from God that isn't in and through the Holy Spirit. Apart from the Holy Spirit, we have nothing. The New Testament message about the Holy Spirit is that the Holy Spirit is the communicator and conveyor of all of God's blessing to God's people. The Holy Spirit enables us to learn and speak the language of this culture.

Now, you might ask, "What is the purpose, Rich, of these dramatic touches from God that we on occasion see here in the Vineyard?" People come

up here at the end of a service for prayer and occasionally they will seem to be dramatically and physically touched. What is going on with them?

In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit not only communicates blessings to us, but the Holy Spirit is meant to be the experienced presence of God. The Holy Spirit is meant to be felt, to be experienced. We looked at some of the verbs used of the Holy Spirit's coming. They are all experiential words. The Holy Spirit comes upon people. The Holy Spirit falls upon people. The Holy Spirit fills people up. The Holy Spirit is poured out upon us. And all of that creates in people a felt experience of God's presence.

You might ask, "Rich, what is the purpose of this felt presence of the Spirit? Why have we heard so much today about these dramatic touches by the Holy Spirit where someone might shake or fall? What is the point of the Spirit's powerful coming?"

Now, I cannot exhaustively cover the purposes of God in coming upon someone and touching them dramatically in a felt way. There is an infinite number of things that God does in your life when the Holy Spirit falls upon you so that you feel God's presence. Certainly, the first thing that God wishes to do in your life is save you, rescue you. And very often, as someone receives Christ and asks Christ to forgive their sins, they feel something going on. They sense the warmth of the love of God in their hearts. There is a sense of freedom and joy and release. They say, "Yes, I feel God's presence in a way that I haven't felt God before."

The major reason why the presence of God comes is to save people. But often in these dramatic touches, God is communicating to his children that he loves us. That is a high priority for God our Father—to touch his children so that his children know that they are loved.

One of my favorite texts in the Bible is in Romans 8 that describes the powerful touch of the Lord. "You did not receive a spirit of slavery again to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption. And by him, we cry 'Abba Father'. The Spirit himself bearing witness to our spirits that we are children of God."

Why does the Holy Spirit come powerfully upon a person? It is often to communicate to our spirits that we are God's children. After a dramatic touch by God, many people will say, "I now know at a deeper level that God loves me and I am his child."

Why does the Holy Spirit fall upon us? The Holy Spirit falls on us to save, to bear witness to our spirits that we are God's children and to release people from bondage. The Spirit is the spirit of holiness. And God wants to work into our lives righteousness and holiness. How does he do that? By the Holy Spirit.

Ezekiel 36, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws."

The Spirit's touch is often designed to release people from bondage to sin. As the apostle Paul writes 2 Corinthians 3:17, "Where the Spirit of God is, there is freedom." So often people are trapped and habitually given over to a certain sin. But one of these dramatic occasions of the falling of the Holy Spirit will propel the person forward so that they experience liberty and freedom from a habit of sin in a way that they didn't before.

And you know what else I think occurs when someone is touched by the Holy Spirit? Often there is a heightened faith in the existence and the reality of God. You know, much of the secular world that we live in has trained us to experience the absence of God. God is absent. God is dead. God doesn't exist. Well, he certainly doesn't exist on television, does he? Except as a swear word. TV tells us repeatedly, over and over again, that life can be lived without God and that God's way of thinking about things—a relationship, sex, money—that is not relevant.

God doesn't exist in school. For sixteen years, people go to school for six or seven hours a day and are taught about life, but God doesn't fit in anywhere. We are taught biology with no reference to God. We are taught history without ever hearing about the history of God's dealing with the world. We are taught about the origin of the universe but there is no talk about God. We are taught about the arts, music and poetry, but there is no connection drawn to worship or creation or God's gifts.

God doesn't exist in the government. God doesn't exist at work.

And then God breaks through and touches you physically. He allows you feel his presence. And you know what often happens after someone has one of these dramatic touches by God, experiences the presence of God? Very often the person will immediately say, "I can't believe how real God is. I mean I have always believed in God, but I thought he was way out there. I thought God was up in the sky. I thought you just believed in God with your heart. I didn't know that God was so real that you could feel him. That he was so real that you could feel that he would actually touch you."

And this experience moves people into a whole new realm of faith. One of the most exciting things that occurs when God physically brings his presence to a person is the shift that I have seen hundreds of times in peoples' faith level. "Wow! Christianity is really real. It is not just my belief. I mean this is actually true."

But the thing that I want to look at today regarding why God comes dramatically, why he pours the Holy Spirit out upon us, why the Holy Spirit falls on us, why the Holy Spirit comes is to empower people for ministry. The Holy Spirit is the divine enabler for doing ministry. These touches by God, along with communicating love and healing and freedom and a sense of God's reality, are often designed to enable someone, to impart to someone the power to do the works of Jesus.

You need God's power and divine enabling to do the works of Jesus. Have any of you tried to ever share the gospel with someone who just doesn't believe? You talk with them but it is like hitting a brick wall. You argue and they have other arguments. You try to persuade and they are not persuaded. You try all of your illustrations and all of your illustrations just fall flat like Coke without fizz. And you end up saying, "What will ever break through?"

The missionary, in particular, knows this. He or she knows that apart from the power of the Holy Spirit upon the message, nothing will break through.

We are sending people out from this church around the world to be missionaries. This next year, several of our couples—Andy and Kathy Saperstein, you heard from Andy a few weeks ago; Tom and Deanna Parkhurst; maybe some others, are going to Central Asia to be missionaries to Muslims. Do

you think or do you think they think that there is any hope of seeing Muslims turn to Jesus as Savior apart from the power of the Holy Spirit? It ain't going to happen. Their wisdom, their persuasive powers, their ability to argue—do you think that is going to count more than 1500 years of culture and training and societal pressure and persecution and family ties and all that is wrapped up in why someone is a Muslim? Only the power of the Holy Spirit will break through darkness in the Muslim world.

Only the power of the Holy Spirit will break through the wall that is up to Christ in your family—your spouse and those of you who have in your families unbelieving family members and those of you who have friends who are not believers. The folks at work who don't believe. You have talked and talked, but there is this veil, this darkness, this wall. What will pierce that? The power of the Holy Spirit, that's all. You aren't going to get through by human endeavor alone.

Do you think that if you place your hands on someone that you can bring healing to their body? You know you can't and you know that I can't. The only way that someone gets well in prayer is by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now, in this talk that I am doing today on "Learning to Move in the Power of the Kingdom" I am going to keep coming back to our need of being saturated with thoughts of Jesus. Moving in the power of the Spirit is a result of a thoroughly Christ-centered approach to life. As Paul says in Colossians 2:9-10, "In Christ all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form and you have been given fullness in Christ who is the head over every power and authority."

So, as we look at moving in the power of the Holy Spirit, we are going to keep coming back to a Christ-centeredness, a soaking in Christ. "Learning to Move in the Power of the Kingdom." Let's pray.

Okay, I tried to establish that the Holy Spirit comes in these significant touches, this sense of his presence for a number of reasons: to communicate God's love to people, to give people a sense of God's reality. But the focal point of today's talk is going to be that one of the major reasons that God comes in these powerful touches is to empower. To give us divine enabling to do ministry.

Now, I want you to see this in the scripture. You see, in the Bible there is what I would call the Jesus model of ministry. The question is how did Jesus do what he did? Flip over with me to Luke 3. Luke 3:21, "When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, whom I love, with you I am well pleased.'"

The Bible is very clear that Jesus' entire ministry began after this powerful experience of being touched by the Holy Spirit. The gospel writers very clearly say that his ministry began with the coming of the Holy Spirit upon him. See, Jesus did all of his miracles not as God, as Deity. You never hear Jesus say, "Heal the blind man. Hey, it is not a problem for me. After all, I created people's eyes so that I can heal." Jesus did his entire ministry as a man who was relying on the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus' ministry began when the Spirit of God fell upon him at his baptism.

Now we need to be careful here; I am in no way communicating adoptionist theology – that Jesus was simply anointed by the Spirit in a special way at baptism. No, I am talking about the eternal God the Son as the Nicene

creed puts it “God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God” or as the Caledonian Creed puts it “truly God and truly man.” We are not talking here about Christ's being, what philosophers call ontology in reference to his being – Jesus was the God-man from the moment of his conception. We are talking about the function. How did Jesus the God-man do his miracles?

All of the stories that are in Gnostic gospels and all of the second and third century documents of Jesus doing miracles as a child—there are all these stories that were written in the first two centuries of Jesus doing miracles as a child, he was working in his father's carpenter shop and, “Oh my goodness, I cut the board too short” and Jesus just takes the board and stretches it. He fits it right in place and then, poof, the cabinet is made. Or one time there is a story of Jesus' friends annoying him and he turns them all into donkeys. That would be really cool as a child. Hey, I don't like you—whoosh, you are a goat! There is a story of Jesus turning clay pigeons into real birds. You know, tossing them up into the air and turning them into real birds. All those stories are phony because there is no record of any of Jesus' miracles before he was powerfully touched by the Holy Spirit. The Jesus model is that ministry is done by the power of the Kingdom.

You say, “Well, let me see that in the Bible, Rich.”

Well, let's look at Luke 4 and at every point in Luke 4 we see the activity of the Holy Spirit. Verse 1 says, “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit returned from the Jordan [so he is full of the Holy Spirit and then it says] and was led by the Spirit into the desert.” He was full of the Holy Spirit and then he was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert.

Flip down to Luke 4:14, “Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit.” Full of the Spirit; led by the Spirit; and in the power of the Spirit. “And news about him spread throughout the whole countryside.”

Then, let's look down at Luke 4:16. It says, “He went to Nazareth where he had been brought up and on the Sabbath Day he went into the Synagogue as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him and unrolling it, he found the place where it was written.” Now, listen to what Jesus says about himself and his ministry: “The Spirit of the Lord is one me, because he has anointed me [why did the Holy Spirit come on Jesus? To anoint him. That means to imbue him with power. For what purpose? To preach good news to the poor. [So God's Spirit came on Jesus so that Jesus' preaching would be powerful.] He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners [To release people from demonic bondage] and recovery of sight for the blind [To heal], to release the oppressed [Again, to bring about freedom from demonic bondage], to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

The Spirit of God came on Jesus for three purposes: to give power to Jesus' preaching; to give power to Jesus so that Jesus could heal the sick; and, to give power to Jesus so that he could deliver people from demonic bondage. You say, “Do we see examples of the power of the Spirit in Jesus' ministry and teaching, in casting out demons and in healing?”

Let's read the rest of the chapter in Luke 4:31. It says, “He went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people. They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority.” Jesus preached in the power of the Spirit and it created amazement and a change in people's lives. He not only preached in the power of the Spirit, he cast out

demons in the power of the Spirit. “In the synagogue, there was a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, ‘What do you want with us? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the holy one of God.’ ‘Be quiet,’ Jesus said sternly. ‘Come out of him.’ And the demon threw the man down before them all and came out of him without injuring him. All the people were amazed and said to each other, ‘What is this teaching? With authority and power he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!’”

He preaches in the power of the Holy Spirit, he casts out demons in the power of the Spirit. That is what Matthew 12:28 says. How do we cast demons out? Matthew 12:28 Jesus tells us his methodology. He says, “If, by the Spirit of God, I cast out demons...” Not, “If, because I am God, I cast out demons...” “If, by the Spirit of God, I cast out demons, then truly the kingdom of God has come upon you.” It is by the Holy Spirit that Jesus casts out demons. That is how demons are cast out today. Apart from the power of the Spirit, you can’t cast one out.

How did Jesus heal? By the power of the Holy Spirit. Flip over to Luke 5. “One day as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law would come from every village of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem were sitting there. And the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick.”

Do you understand? Jesus didn’t heal people because he was God. He could have, but that is not the way he did it. It was by the power of the Holy Spirit as he relied on the Spirit as a man filled with the Holy Spirit.

This is the way that Peter sums up Jesus’ ministry. Listen to this. If you are taking notes, write down Acts 10:37-38. This is Peter’s understanding of how Jesus did miracles. Acts 10:37-38, “You know what has happened throughout Judea beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached. How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power and how he went around doing good and healing all those who were under the power of the devil because God was with him.”

How did Jesus go around doing good? By the power of the Spirit. The Jesus Model.

Now, how do we preach with effectiveness, heal with effectiveness, cast out demons with effectiveness? How do we followers of Christ do good with impact? What’s the Jesus model? By the power of the Holy Spirit. Acts 1, Luke writes, “In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach.” The former book that Acts 1:1 is referring to is the gospel of Luke. Luke wrote the story of Jesus in two volumes. The gospel of Luke is the story of what Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he ascended. The story of Acts is the second volume and it is the story of what Jesus continues to do and to teach through his followers, the church. Luke is what Jesus began to do and to teach until he was ascended and Acts is the story of what Jesus continues to do and to teach through his disciples, the church.

Now, Jesus relied on the power of the Spirit to do and to teach. What do the disciples need in order to do and to teach? Let me say it again. Jesus relied on the power of the Spirit to do and to teach. Let’s read what Jesus says, “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised which you have heard me speak about. [And then he goes on in verse 8 and says] You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses

in Jerusalem and in all Judea and all Samaria, to the ends of the earth.” If Jesus relied on the power of the Spirit, then we need the power of the Spirit.

Why does the Spirit come? To give power to preach. And we see that, of course, in the life of the disciples. In Acts 2 the Holy Spirit comes upon them at Pentecost and they preach so effectively that what happens? Verse 36-37 of Acts 2, Peter is preaching and he says, “Let all Israel, let all the Jewish people be assured of this: God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ.” And it says that “When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘What shall we do?’ Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’ And they did that and about 3000 believed and were saved.”

What is going to cut someone to the heart? Preaching in the power of the Spirit. And we see in the life of Peter that he heals by the power of the Holy Spirit. Acts 13 we see Paul dealing with demons by the power of the Spirit. Acts 13:9, “Saul who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, ‘You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right. You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the ways of the Lord?’”

Empowered. The Jesus Model suggests that these touches we see up front here are for empowering to do the works of Christ. And apart from the empowering of the Spirit, you cannot preach with effectiveness. And apart from the empowering of the Spirit, you cannot heal the sick. And apart from the empowering of the Spirit, you cannot cast a demon out. You need supernatural enabling, supernatural empowerment for ministry. You see this in the Bible and all through history.

Dwight Moody, who was a 19th century evangelist, related how two women, after many years of listening to him preach, would regularly say to him after he preached, “You need the power of the Holy Spirit.” Can you imagine that? I mean I don’t know what that would do to me if a couple of women came up after each time I spoke and said, “You need the power of the Spirit.”

Moody reflects after this is in his autobiography, he said, “I need the power? Why I thought I had the power because I had the largest congregation in Chicago at the time and there were many conversions, I was in a sense satisfied. But these two godly women were praying for Moody and with Moody and they kept pouring out their hearts in prayer before God that I might receive the power of the Holy Spirit. And through their prayers, there grew this hunger in my soul and I began to cry out as I never did before. I really felt that I could not live unless I had this power for service.”

Some time later, Moody relates that in the city of New York, “Oh what a day. I can not describe it. I seldom refer to it. It is almost too sacred an experience to name. Paul had an experience of which he never spoke for 14 years. I can only say that God revealed himself to me and I had such an experience of his love that I had to ask him to stay his hand. I went to preaching again. The sermons weren’t different. I did not present any new truths or any new ideas and, yet, hundreds were converted. I would not be placed back before that blessed experience if you should give me all the world.”

Moody had witnessed to the gospel for many years and with some effectiveness, but after being empowered by the Spirit there came an effectiveness such as he had never before experienced.

You know one of the symbols for the Holy Spirit is water. The Bible describes in the book of Ezekiel in Ezekiel 47, “The river of God proceeding from the throne of God.” I believe the image of the river of God is a picture of the Holy Spirit in the Temple. But very directly, we see that the Holy Spirit is described as being poured out in Acts 2:17-18. And we saw a few weeks ago, when I preached on that verse, “The love of God is poured out in our hearts...” the Holy Spirit is often described as being water poured out.

Jesus says that the Spirit of God will be in us like streams of living water filling our inner beings.

Now, here is a little word picture for you. The Holy Spirit is being poured out in our time, in our day. All over the world the Spirit is coming like rain. He is watering the earth. He is falling on people. Many people who have been dry and in need, the Spirit of God is being poured out on them. The rain is falling.

Do you know what? I believe many of us have umbrellas up. Some of us don't know that we do. But the rain is falling and some of us have umbrellas up. We say, “I don't feel the rain.” We don't know we have an umbrella up.

Part of what I am trying to do in this series is get you take the umbrella down so that you can feel the rain too. You also can experience the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let me share with you in finishing up three of the biggest umbrellas that cover people and keep them from the outpouring of the Spirit. Certainly, we must first begin with theology. A big theological umbrella covers much of the church. Friends, if your doctrinal beliefs are that the Holy Spirit does not come in power, that spiritual gifts are not for today, that God does not heal, that God does not deliver people from demons, in fact, demons don't even exist—if you have been raised with the big umbrella of cessationism, which says that in the 1st century, after finishing the Bible, God lost his voice. He got divine laryngitis so that he no longer speaks. God withdrew all of his gifts because the church today doesn't obviously need them. We certainly don't need healing because we have CAT scan monitors and aspirin. And people today are so mentally healthy! We have such great therapists that we don't need any kind of deliverances.

I don't know how many of you have been raised in churches that taught you that at the end of the 1st century that God basically withdrew from the world. Yes, miracles occurred, but back then and not now. But if you have a theology that says such things as I am talking about do not occur, well, you probably won't see or experience the outpouring of the Spirit. You need to take down that umbrella. You must have a theology that permits spiritual gifts.

Many of us don't have a theological umbrella up. The second big umbrella that we have over us is the world-view umbrella. Now, I have come back to this issue of world-view in this church over and over again because I believe that our perception of reality, of what reality is, is the control over what we regard as actual or probable or possible or impossible regarding the Holy Spirit. The conceptualizations, these perceptions of reality, form controls. They filter out from us the presence of God.

See, we have filtering systems, we have ways of looking at life that interpret the world to us and reality to us. We look at life through a set of lenses. Certainly, you have seen this, those of you who are married to someone of the opposite sex, which I hope embraces all of you who are married. But have you ever noticed that the opposite sex doesn't look at reality? Have you noticed that? The opposite sex thinks irrationally a good deal of the time.

Wives, how often have you been frustrated with your husbands because as you began to share with him a problem, he tries to immediately solve it? I mean, why would any one jump in and try to solve a problem that you are sharing and give you a suggested course of action? You just want to have someone listen as you share. You want someone who cares. Your husband thinks he is helping you. He doesn't understand. God, what is the matter with this woman you gave me? I am trying to help her and she is always upset with me.

Men, how often have you been frustrated by your wives who are always trying to control you by pretending to help you? Trying to be like your mother, bossing you around and giving you orders. Wives, you are left scratching your head and saying, "I was just trying to help and he gets so up-tight." Don't push me around and don't boss me around. I don't want your help.

You think wouldn't it be helpful if you just talked about all of your problems with me? Shared with me everything that happened to me today and everything you are frustrated with?

Husbands, you are saying, "Don't make me talk."

Same world—two totally different perspectives. You want a current illustration of the difference in world views? Must we look any farther than the O.J. Simpson trial? Do we have any better example in current American society than the great divide between the way that African Americans are looking at life and the world and the way that Caucasian Americans are looking at it? Both groups scratch their heads, looking at each other and say, "Don't you see the facts? What is the matter with you?" African Americans are saying, "Don't you see the facts? Are you so totally blind after the police on hundreds of occasions, hundreds, are proven to be liars and to plant evidence? There are just literally hundreds of occasions of this. And I have three or four personal experiences of being abused by the police." And then you get a guy who is the chief investigator on this case being a known, self-confessed racist. Are you saying there is no reasonable doubt?

And Caucasian Americans say, "Well, I know that there are occasional examples of misconduct by the police and occasionally police plant evidence, but our experience, our world view is that most police are basically decent and good. Our experience of authority is generally okay. Most police are like most doctors, they are generally good with an occasional bad one."

We look at each other and say, "We don't get it. How could you look at the facts so divergently?"

Friends, much of what we believe reveals not so much about reality is like, but what our view of the world is like. We are constantly revealing to others our perception of reality.

Now listen, just as we needed to understand and adopt the Jesus Model for Ministry, we need to adopt the Jesus Mind for reality, to move in the power of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul says in Philippians 2, "Have this mind in you

which was also in Christ Jesus. Think about reality the way that Jesus thought about reality.”

You say, “How can I look at life not through my controls and my grids, but the way life really is?”

You must have the mind of Christ. There is no other way to get to reality with a capital R unless you have the mind of Christ. You start looking at the world through the eyes of Jesus and you will be shocked to see how different the world looks through the eyes of Jesus than through your own western, secularized, American eyes.

You know, as you read the gospels, you are going to find that so many of your thoughts about the way the world works are not the way the world works, since Jesus, of course, is the definer of what is reality. We think that money brings great blessing always, always. That having more money brings more security. Having more money brings more of God to us. Jesus didn’t think that way. Jesus saw money as a potential and often actual block between people and God. Jesus said that money often gets in the way of people trusting in God. That very few rich people would be saved. We look at rich people and feel envious. Jesus looked at the wealthy and felt sad. Jesus looked at a rich man and felt sad about him and his situation. Have you ever looked at a really wealthy, powerful person and felt sad for them? If you did, you are thinking like Jesus. Do you see reality with a capital R or did Jesus?

You say God is with rich people and not with poor people. Jesus had it almost exactly the reverse. He very rarely commends wealthy people. And he often, often describes how God is with the poor and saves the poor and hears the cries of the poor and gives faith to the poor.

Think about the way you look at suffering. It is all bad. It is to be avoided. Think of the way that Jesus thought about suffering. It is a path to glory. It is a path to holiness. It is a path to God’s power.

How do we pull the umbrella down that holds back the power of the Holy Spirit? This world view umbrella that says, “Surely, what I am looking at right now could not be a demon. Demons don’t exist.” You read the gospels and soak your mind with the mind of Jesus and say, “Did Jesus believe in demons?” He absolutely did.

I know no other way to pull the naturalistic umbrella down than to go back to the gospels and to look at the way that Jesus looked at life and looked at relationships between people, looked at women, looked at the powerful and looked at the wealthy, looked at money, looked at demons, looked at healing. I know no other way to pull the naturalistic umbrella down than to gain the mind of Christ as it is revealed in the gospels.

Yes, we have a theological umbrella over us, we have a world view umbrella over us, but you know the most insidious umbrella, the most demoralizing umbrella over so many that keeps us from experiencing the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, is what I have called the negative self-image umbrella. Even if you establish in your life the theology for the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit and even if you deal with world view problems by soaking your mind with the mind of Jesus, taking the umbrella down so that you can really feel the outpouring of the Spirit won’t happen until you deal with what I call the negative self-image umbrella. So many people that I talk with,

and I mean dozens, have basically said to me, “Yes, I believe that the things you are describing could happen. I do believe that God comes in power. I have seen examples of it here in Vineyard. I watch people get touched. I don’t believe that everyone is just faking it or trying to get attention or it is just emotionalism. I think that some of the folks that I have talked to are credible witnesses. Yes, I do believe in the power of the Spirit.”

We have testimonies of healing here at Vineyard and we are going to have some more during this series of what God has done in some people’s lives. But here is the problem.

“Rich, I don’t think that God will do those things to me or through me.”

See, folks, the bottom line is that folks feel inside, “I absolutely grant that the Spirit of God does come. What makes it so horrible is that I don’t think he will come to me. When I ask the Holy Spirit to come, he won’t come. When I ask God to touch me, he doesn’t touch me. And he won’t touch me. And he won’t use me. The Holy Spirit is just another area that I fail at.”

I see it all around me. Some of us feel like Gideon’s fleece. In the Old Testament the great hero Gideon put out a sheep’s skin and the miracle was that the skin was placed outside over night and it was entirely dry, but the ground around it was entirely full of dew. I think so many of us feel like that. I see the rain all around me, but I am personally dry and the rain never falls on me.

The negative self-image umbrella: God won’t do it through me. He might do it through you, Rich, I can believe that. I can believe even more that he would do it through some great healer or some really great person, but not to me and through me.

Is that where you are at?

You know, just as moving in the power of the Spirit requires the model of Jesus, Jesus moved in the power as the basis of his ministry; and just as in pulling down the world view umbrella requires the mind of Jesus, I believe healing self image also requires us to be soaked in Christ. We must remember “Jesus in me” as the answer to our self-image problems. The only way anyone will ever move in the power of the Spirit is by focusing on Jesus and not on us. It is about Jesus. It is not about you.

Let me go through a little dialogue that will play in your head if you choose to become obedient and start praying for the sick and asking God to move through your life in the power of the Holy Spirit. Here is a little dialogue that will occur. Satan will batter your self-image as you try to pray. He will use half truths, which is often what he does, he uses half truths that will convince you that you will not move in the power of the Spirit. And so in your mind you will hear something like this: “You big phony. Who do you think you are trying to heal someone? You don’t even know what you are doing. You are trying to put up this big show that you can do something, but you are not an expert. You don’t know how to do this. You have no experience.”

Half-truth. You are not an expert. You don’t know what you are doing. You don’t have any experience. But Jesus is an expert in healing. Jesus has experience in prayer. Jesus knows what he is doing. He has been at this a long time. It is not about you. It is about Jesus.

And Satan comes along and says, “But you know, it has not been that long since your last big sin. How do you think you can do ministry when it has been such a short time since your last big sin?”

Half truth. It has been a short time since my last big sin. But this is not about me, it is about Jesus and I remind myself that I need to confess any outstanding sin and bring it under Jesus’ grace or remind myself that I have already confessed my sins and so they are according to Hebrews 8:12 “driven from your memory, O God” and they are completely forgiven.

But you know that you haven’t prepared enough and you haven’t prayed enough to be able to do this ministry. Oh, that is true, Lord. I didn’t prepare enough and I didn’t pray enough. But it is not about me. It is about Jesus and what Jesus can do. I am so thankful that it is not based on my holiness or my prayerfulness.

Healing is not brought about by my efforts, but yours. Thank you Lord that it is your effort that will make this come to pass.

But, you are too young. Teens, those in your twenties, you are too young. You need to be at least 10 years older than you are whatever age you are, before you think that you can start doing ministry.

Well, I am young, but Jesus isn’t. Jesus has been doing miracles since the world began. You are weak, I know, but he is strong. If you haven’t gotten your flesh under control and you know all the things that you do—gracious Lord, I don’t plead my flesh, I plead your righteousness and your blood. It is Christ in us that is my hope and glory. It is not me. Christ is my sufficiency.

“I’ve never done this before; healing is not my spiritual gift; I am a teacher; I am a servant; I set up chairs.” Whatever you are batted around with, you say, “Jesus is in me. He is pure enough and righteousness enough. He is smart enough. He has enough faith. He can deal with this temptation, I can’t. I know that, but he can. Jesus, go get ‘em.”

Our self-image needs to be healed. It is healed in and through Jesus. Remembering Jesus and remembering what Jesus says about us. You know, for some of us who have really battered self-images and just can’t believe that God would do something with us and to us and through us, may I suggest a little practical exercise? You may need to go through this over and over and over again—this little process of healing your self-image and in pulling down this big umbrella. But take a look at Ephesians 1 and every time Paul says that God did something in us, you put in your name.

Read Ephesians 1. This is the healing of our self-image. Let’s Pray.