



Holy Spirit Power

John 14:15-31, John 16:1-15

Speaker: Scott Dudley

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Amen, great to see all of you, thank you, thank you for being here. As many of you know, my wife is a writer. She writes clean historical romance novels. That's an actual category. And a couple weeks ago, a friend of mine texted me a picture of the cover of one of my wife's books. And the title of it is *A Very Plain Young Man*. And so he texted me this and said, Scott, I'm sure this title isn't at all autobiographical. That was cruel. So I texted him back and said, not me, I'm not young.

But that title does say something. I think that title hints at something about our faith. And that is without the Holy Spirit, our relationship with Jesus will always be very plain, very bland, and very immature. The Holy Spirit is the one who puts energy and life and courage and hope and joy into us. The Holy Spirit is the cayenne pepper of our faith. It gives it life and it gives it power and it gives it purpose.

We're doing what I think is a really important sermon series for us as individuals and as a church called *Unleashed*, about how Jesus unleashes us from the things that hold us back from the courage and the joy and the hope and the meaning and the purpose and the adventure that he invites us into. And there are lots of things that hold us back from that bigger life. Our obsession with comfort is a big one. Our being risk averse is another one. School, career, or financial ambitions that consume our energy and our time could be a grudge that we're hanging on to or a bad habit or an addiction or a health, relationship, financial, or career problem. There's no shortage of leashes. And we cannot fully unleash ourselves. Only the Holy Spirit can do that. So we need to get to know the Holy Spirit.

This week, Pastor Sergio said that, you know, when it comes to the Holy Spirit, there are two kinds of churches. There are some churches like, Holy Spirit, yeah, all in, let's go, yeah, Holy Spirit. And then there are other churches that go, Holy Spirit, let's have a meeting about it. He said that in a meeting about the Holy Spirit. I kid you not. I'm like, well, I know what kind of church we are now. But we will never have the courage, the power and the joy that we want without the Holy Spirit. We will never see our friendships and our families and our schools and our offices transformed without the Holy Spirit. And

as a church, we will never have the impact in our region and world that God calls us to without the Holy Spirit. And as individuals, we cannot and we will not ever be set free without the Holy Spirit. So we need to get to know the Holy Spirit.

And the Bible says that what God is, what God is, is a relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One God, three persons. And the Holy Spirit is God himself living inside of us. And there are hundreds of things that I could say about the Holy Spirit. It's a big topic. But for the purposes of this sermon and for talking about being unleashed, I'm going to focus on two ways that the Holy Spirit unleashes us. And the first is, the Holy Spirit gives us power.

In the Bible, the Holy Spirit is often described as a rushing wind or a raging inferno, a fire. Romans 8 says, "And if the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his spirit who lives in you." In other words, if you know Jesus, the power that raised Jesus from the dead lives inside of you. That is an awful lot of power that is available to us, that we're not always tapping into. And to be unleashed, we're going to need the Holy Spirit's power. Because to unleash us, Jesus may call us to let go of some of our school or career ambitions, to live counter to culture and invest more in connection with him and connection with others. He may ask us to be part of his rescue mission somehow by reaching out to people who are in prison or caring for the poor or fighting for racial justice or all kinds of things. He may call us to reconcile and forgive someone, and that's going to be a hard conversation. That's going to be an awkward conversation, but it's going to set us free from the bitterness and the grudge holding that often, and the unforgiveness that holds us back. To do any of those things that will unleash us, we're going to need the power of the Holy Spirit.

Back in my former church, there was this time I had to confront someone on the staff, who was—this guy was just a bully. He was big guy, and he bullied, and he had a hot temper, and he intimidated people, and I was a lot younger than him. And back then, I was even more uncomfortable with confrontation. I prayed for almost an hour before that meeting, and I could just feel the Holy Spirit putting courage into me. It wasn't me just psyching myself up to, you know, let's go do this. It was coming from outside of me. And I was able to confront him in a loving way. In spite of all the ways he bullied and blustered and tried to intimidate, I was able to just kind of hold my ground, even though he was way older than me, because the Holy Spirit had put power into me to do something that as a leader, you sometimes have to do. It unleashed me from those worries about confrontation. That's the Holy Spirit's power.

Pastor Stephen Foster tells the story of a guy who had come forward to receive prayer after a worship service, and then after he got prayed for, he found Stephen and he said, yeah, that was a really weird experience. And Stephen said, well, what do you mean? And the guy said, well, there's this difficult situation going on in my personal life, and the person who was praying for me started describing that situation in accurate detail. But I don't know that person, never met that person. And how did he know what's going on in my life? And Stephen said, well, there are these things called spiritual gifts, and one of

them is prophecy and insight. And the guy said, oh, that's interesting. And then Stephen said, well, how long have you been coming to church? And the guy said, about 20 minutes. He said, I'm an Uber driver, and I dropped someone off here, and I heard the music, so I came in, and then you invited people to come up and get prayer, so I did that. So yeah, I'm brand new. He became a Christian. Like that day, he became a Christian. Okay, whoever prayed for him, the Holy Spirit gave that person supernatural power to know what was happening with that guy, and being able to set him free, pray in a way that set him free from his personal situation that he was facing. The Holy Spirit gives us power. Wonder working power.

Second, second way the Holy Spirit unleashes us is by guiding us in truth. Jesus says, "When he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you." So much of what leashes us are the lies that we believe. Lies like: without this amount of money, or without this certain kind of college, or this certain kind of job, or without looking a certain kind of a way, or without this relationship, I won't be happy, I won't be secure. That's a lie. And it causes us to overwork, or stay in a bad relationship, or stress about money, or obsess with how we look—all of which are leashes.

If God called you to quit your job and take a different one that would give you more meaning and purpose, but would be a lot less prestigious and a lot less money, would you do it? Or would the cultural lies of what the good life is about—success—keep you back, hold you back, leash you from doing what God called you to do? Temptations are always lies, right? Temptation is always, oh, do this, it'll feel good, which it almost always does for a little bit, but then it brings pain. And it's in prayer that the Holy Spirit counters those lies with God's truth and sets us free.

The Holy Spirit speaks in a variety of ways. Primary way he speaks is through the Bible, but also the Spirit speaks through each other, through community, through thoughts that aren't our thoughts, memories, pictures, song lyrics, scripture verses that suddenly flash into our heads. And it's different than intuition, and I know it's different than my own thoughts. It's different kinds of thoughts, sound different, often move more quickly, often occur in a different place in my brain, and usually accompanied by a sense of being known and being loved. There have been times when I'm praying for someone and I start to say things that are not coming from me. Sometimes things I couldn't know about the other person, and they're like, how did you know that? That's the Holy Spirit giving me the words to pray. The other way we know it's the Holy Spirit and not just ourselves making it up is the Holy Spirit never draws attention to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit always points to Jesus. The Holy Spirit is never the guest of honor, ever. The Holy Spirit always points to Jesus who is the guest of honor. That's what Jesus means when he says, "He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you." And glory in the Bible means beauty or it can also mean weight. The Holy Spirit makes Jesus something more than an intellectual concept, gives Jesus weight in our lives. The Holy Spirit makes Jesus real to us and guides us toward Jesus' truth.

A number of years ago, I was in one of those seasons of discouragement that we all face and some stuff here wasn't going very well and there was a lot of harsh criticism coming my way. And, you know, nice things get said to me too, but this was just one of those seasons when nothing seemed to be working and a lot of people were upset. And I went to a Christian conference with a friend of mine. And the first night of the conference, there were all these pastors talking about all the great things that was happening in their church. Oh, God's really moving in our church. And there's all these, everything we touch just turns to gold. Everything's working out so great. The Lord is really with us and everyone in our church is so happy and so excited. I'm like, praise the Lord. And sit down. And then I started to think, man, these guys are way better. I'm a failure. I'm no good at this. I should just quit and open a rutabaga farm or something. And then that went into, well, maybe God loves these other pastors more than me. And that's why it's working for them, which is just such stupid theology.

Well, the next morning, I got up and I went to the fitness room in the hotel and I was on the elliptical machine, feeling powerfully sorry for myself and rather enjoying it. And I got one of those thoughts that I knew was not my thought. And it said, Scott, has anything good ever happened at BelPres? Well, one or two or hundreds. What's your point, Lord? And then I heard God say, and where in scripture do I ever call anyone a failure? And I was like, well, you know, Second Dudley, Chapter 5, too. Nowhere, Lord, nowhere. And then I heard God say, then whose voice have you been listening to? That's a really good question. Then whose voice have you been listening to? I'm like, that would be the devil, Lord. And something shifted in me. And the Holy Spirit unleashed me from that, from discouragement, by telling me the truth right there on the hotel elliptical.

So whose voice have you been listening to? Is it the media's voice? Is it friends' voice? Whose voice have you been listening to? Jesus says the devil is a liar and the father of lies. The devil whispers lies to us, plants lies in our brain. He's the father of lies. But for anything to be born, it doesn't need just a father. It also needs a mother. So if the devil is the father of lies, then who's the mother? We are.

The devil whispers lies that leash us and we nurture it. We grow that lie by agreeing with it or living out of it or passing it on to others. The Holy Spirit tells us the truth to set us free.

So here are two good prayers to pray this week. Holy Spirit, what lies am I believing right now? And then, Holy Spirit, what do you say? Because when you hear the truth from the Spirit, it unleashes us. Spirit gives us power. Spirit guides us in truth to set us free.

So then what is our role in all of this? That's what the Spirit does. What's our role? Well, the Bible says, do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt, but test them all. Another way you could translate this is don't throw cold water on what the Holy Spirit is doing. If the Holy Spirit is moving in your life or in someone else's life or in our church or in a worship service, don't quench that Spirit. Don't just shut that down. Go with it.

And there are a couple of ways not to quench the Spirit. Three in particular. Three ways we don't quench, not to quench the Spirit. Things we do to not quench it. And the first is don't dismiss the work of the Spirit. The text says, do not treat prophecies with contempt, but test them all. If the Holy Spirit is doing something, if someone prophesies something, don't just dismiss it or criticize the person that said it or give them the side eye. Last week, I told you about how for months my eyes, my vision, was blurry. Doctors couldn't figure out what was wrong, but then it got better and the doctors don't know why it got better. And I told you how I didn't connect that to the fact that many of you had been praying for me. I quenched the Spirit by dismissing or explaining away something God had done.

And then, just this week, the Mariners won the AOS. First time in 24 years. That is the movement of the Holy Spirit, my friend. And Houston, the evil empire, is eliminated. It's a miracle. I'm joking, only kind of joking. Now, some of you might be, yeah, yeah, okay, great. Don't dismiss miracles. But I also don't want to be one of those people that just believes everything is a miracle. I don't want to be naive. Yeah, no, we don't want to be naive. That's why this passage says, test it. Does this align with scripture? Run it by trusted Christian friends and pray, Jesus, is that you that did that? Or am I making that up?

Second way not to quench the Spirit: follow the nudge. If the Spirit nudges you to do something, do it. That man who prayed for the Uber driver I told you about and the Spirit revealed something about that man—he had to follow that nudge. The guy that was praying had to follow that nudge and say what the Holy Spirit was giving him to say. And it could have gone very badly. It could have been a miss. He could have gotten it wrong, but he followed the nudge. And sometimes we will get it wrong. If we follow the nudge of the Spirit, sometimes we will get it wrong.

And oh, let's just have some truth telling right now. That's hard for us, isn't it? We never want to be wrong. We always want to do something right and never make a mistake. But let me ask you this question: would it be worth following the Spirit's nudge and getting it wrong sometimes if it meant you would be fully unleashed? Are you willing to take that risk, to be set free? Because the more we follow the nudges—and yes, have it not work sometimes—the better we get at discerning when it's the Spirit and when it isn't. Don't ignore the nudge, follow it.

The writer Ken Davis talks about a time he got on a bus and out of duty just said, okay, Lord, if you want me to tell somebody about you, give me a sign. And then a few stops later, this guy got on the bus, sat down next to Ken, and a few minutes into the ride, looked at Ken and said, you don't happen to know anything about Jesus, do you? And Ken said, I then prayed, Lord, if this is you, confirm this sign, turn the bus into an armadillo. Don't shut it down, follow the nudge.

And then third and biggest of all, release control. When it comes to the Holy Spirit, you never want to be in a posture of control, but the problem is so many of us want to be in control of everything. Control of outcomes, control of my reputation. I don't want to look foolish, right? We need to release control of our circumstances, of outcomes, of our emotions, allow ourselves to feel moved by the Holy Spirit.

Last week here in our modern worship services, we had an unusually large number of people come forward to receive prayer, which is just awesome because this is a growth area for us. Over and over and over again, we hear people say, yeah, I wanted to get prayer, but I was worried that people might think I have a problem if I went up there. Okay, it's obvious you have a problem, several actually. And worrying about what other people think about us, man, that is one of the tightest, biggest leashes we got around us. What will people think if I... man, that holds us back. How much life are we missing? How much of the power of the Spirit are we missing? Because we're so worried about what other people will think. That ain't gonna get us free.

So, action steps for this week. First is the same we've been saying in the whole series: position yourself to experience the Holy Spirit in worship. Just like in football, the receiver has to be in position to receive the ball. Position yourself to experience the Spirit in worship. Let yourself be moved by the music, whether that's quietly in your heart or throwing your hands in the air as you sing. Pay attention to the words. Don't treat the band as like the warm-up act for the sermon. Okay, a good warm-up act, but don't treat the band like a warm-up band for the sermon. Let the music move you emotionally. Pay attention to what you're singing.

Second action step: pray desperately. The opposite of in control is desperate. And a lot of us, including me, put a lot of trust in what we can do in our own efforts. And as a result, we don't really lean on the Lord with desperation. But when it comes to being unleashed, this is way above our pay grade. It's going to take a supernatural movement of the Holy Spirit to set us free. And you know what? Christians from Africa and Asia, or in the African American churches in our own country, they know how to do this well. They model it for the rest of us. And as a result, they often experience God in ways that some of us don't. Pray with desperation.

And then third action step: get baptized or reaffirm your baptism on Baptism Sunday on October 19th. We'll be doing it by immersion or by sprinkling, and it's all about surrendering control. You're going to have to come forward. You're going to get a little bit wet or a lot wet. Hair might get messed up and stuff like that. But it's a way of saying, Holy Spirit, only you can set me free. So I'm letting go of control and leaning into you. You can do that if you've never been baptized or if you have been baptized, you can reaffirm your baptism as a way of saying, Holy Spirit, unleash me. And you can sign up on our website.

I recently heard about a couple who'd been married for about five years, and they both had prestigious sort of high-stress jobs and they had started to drift apart from each other. The wife then began having sleep issues. She just could not sleep even though she was exhausted. And this went on for months. She hadn't been to church in years and years and years. But one night, as she was not sleeping, she got a thought in her head that she knew wasn't hers and it said, you will never sleep unless you are with my people. And that was not the kind of thing she normally thought. So she was like, was that God? She hadn't thought about God in years.

Well, that was a Saturday night. So the next morning, she followed the nudge and went to church, just picked one at random, and was intrigued. So she went back the next week. And then she went back the next week. And then she recommitted her life to Jesus and started going to church every Sunday and also on Wednesday nights for her community group. And her husband, who had never been to church, didn't understand all of this, and finally he said, you are spending a lot of time at church. Did you meet somebody? And she said, yes. And he's perfect. His name is Jesus.

So then the husband started to go to church with her. And then one day during worship, he just felt the Holy Spirit right there with him, felt loved in a way that he had never felt loved before, and he gave his life to Jesus. Over the course of the next few months, some things started to change. Both of them continued to do a good job at their workplace, but they just felt less anxious, less driven to succeed in their career as a way of proving themselves. That leash started to fall off. And when that fell off, all that anxiety trickled down to the people that worked under them. They also stopped being so stressed out about work all the time and trying to prove themselves through career success. The wife's sleep issues went away. She started sleeping through the night.

And then the Holy Spirit began to tell the husband some difficult truths, because sometimes the Holy Spirit tells us difficult truths—about how he gave way more of himself to his career than to his wife. And so one day, he just said to her, I apologize, I've neglected you, I've been focused on my own stuff, I have not loved you the way you deserve to be loved. I am so sorry, and will you forgive me? That made her feel seen and heard and valued, and it reignited their marriage, put joy and fun and romance back into their marriage. The Holy Spirit nudged them to go to church. They did not quench the Spirit, they followed the nudge. And the Spirit countered cultural lies and told them God's truth—that the good life isn't about career or economic success, it's about connection to Jesus and community and being with each other. They were unleashed from stress and anxiety, unleashed from the frantic need to prove themselves all the time, unleashed from the distance that had grown up in their marriage.

Now, in a sermon like this, preachers sometimes tell stories about someone who gets set free in Jesus and then goes and does these huge things. They start orphanages or nonprofits or rescue bunnies or whatever it is. And those are great stories. I've got some of them, I've told some, and I will tell some more. And who knows what else Jesus is going to do with this couple? Because with Jesus, there's always more. But for now, they are doing something less dramatic but very, very valuable: being the husband and wife to each other that God calls them to be, being the leaders in their workplace God calls them to be, and living a freer life connected to Jesus, each other, and community.

Who the Son sets free is free indeed. So as we continue in worship, right now, today, and as you go into this week, ask the Holy Spirit, where do you want to unleash me and how can I cooperate with that so that I can experience the unleashed life that only the Holy Spirit can give us? So, Holy Spirit, you are welcome here. And we know that we cannot unleash ourselves, only you can take those leashes off of us. So Holy Spirit, we turn to you and we say we need you. And Lord, in this moment of silence, we come to

you with this question: where do you want to unleash me and how can I cooperate with that?

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. So Holy Spirit, let freedom reign in this place. Freedom over our lives, freedom in our relationships, freedom from our fears, freedom from all the ambitions that hold us back from the bigger life you want to give us. Lord, may freedom reign in this place—freedom in our minds, freedom in our hearts, freedom in our thinking. Holy Spirit, only you can set us free. Holy Spirit, only you can unleash us. So Holy Spirit, fill us, change us, transform us, and send us out in the powerful name of Jesus. Amen.

Discussion Questions:

Read this week's scripture(s) & answer the below questions with your friends, family, or All In small group.

Opening Question: Looking back to last week's sermon and scripture... How did you live differently or practice what we talked about in your life this week? What did you do and how did it go?

Scripture Reflection Questions: Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What do we learn about the Holy Spirit in these two texts?

Sermon Reflection Questions: Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- What are the various roles the Holy Spirit plays in our lives?
- Of these roles, which have you come to appreciate most recently?

Closing Question and Application: Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

Closing group prayer: Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.