

DAY 1
A Cry for Help

*In my distress I called to the LORD; I cried to my God for help.
From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into
his ears.*

PSALM 18:6

*He said: "In my distress I called to the LORD, and he answered
me. From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help, and you
listened to my cry."*

JONAH 2:2

We've all cried out to God at sometime, haven't we? I can remember a time when I cried out to Him in pure desperation; it was more than forty years ago, just five days after the birth of our first child, Stephen. I came to visit my wife Marion and our new born son in the hospital, expecting to take them home, but when I got to their room I could see that something was dreadfully wrong. Marion described how, when the nurse brought Stephen to her for feeding she immediately saw that he was in distress; and upon investigation discovered that his lower body was black. He was rushed into the emergency department where the doctors determined that he had a tear in his intestine and the resulting infection was leaking into his bloodstream. They told us that he urgently needed surgery but they wanted to transfer him to a teaching hospital in London, Ontario, where they had specialized facilities for operating on newborn infants. London was about one hour's drive away.

Marion remained in hospital overnight, and since I was not allowed to travel in the ambulance, I followed after by car. Fortunately we had relatives in London and they were wonderfully supportive of us during this ordeal. It was while I was driving to London that, through my tears, I cried out to God. I'm not sure exactly what I said, but I'm pretty sure my cry went something like this; "Help God help! Please save our baby! Don't take him from us. It's not fair to take him now. Help God! Help!" And then I distinctly remember adding "Lord, if you do save him, I will serve you for the rest of my life."

Now I know you are not supposed to bargain with God like this, but desperate times call for desperate measures, don't they? And God did save Stephen. He survived the surgery and recovered quickly; we brought him home in three weeks. Not only that but he grew up to be strong and healthy. He played hockey and baseball as a child, switching to lacrosse as a teen and later played field lacrosse for the University of Western Ontario. At University he started weight training and later became a fitness coach. Today he is married with three beautiful children.

So God did hear my cry and he did save Stephen. And I believe that He honoured the second part of my prayer as well, by calling me into His service. I'm still in His service today. Would this have happened anyway? I don't know, but I do hope to find out when we meet face to face.

Are you desperate for help today? Then why not cry out to Him? What do you have to lose? Even if you have doubts or questions, you can still cry out for answers. As I look around the world today I still have questions. Why is the world in such a mess? Why is there so much poverty, famine, war, sickness and evil? I don't have all the answers to these questions but I do know from practical experience that God does answer prayer. The first step in your journey of discovery and healing is to share your needs with Him.

Here's a prayer to guide you:

Help me God, help me! You know my situation (name it) and I am now turning to you for help. I've tried other solutions, but they are not working well. You are the God of all creation, You can do miracles, You can do this ...

God help me to believe in you more and to trust you with this situation. Give me wisdom to cooperate with your solution, And not to insist on doing things my way. Show me what to do and what not to do, And how to step back, let go, and trust you.

Finally God, I really do want to get to know you better, And to establish a closer relationship with you. As I read this devotional give me more insight into yourself, Come teach me your ways.

Further Meditation

Can you think of a time when God answered your prayer? What can you learn from this experience?

DAY 2

Meeting Jesus

But you, He said, who do you say I am? Then Simon Peter spoke up. You are the Christ, he said, the Son of the living God.

MATTHEW 16:15

The woman said to Him, "I know that the Messiah (called Christ) is coming". When He comes, He will tell us all things. Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

JOHN 4:25-26

I find that the stories of Jesus' life in the Bible are so inspiring, so wonderful, so encouraging. They reveal how He:

- »» Was born in a humble stable, and grew to manhood without fuss or fanfare.
- »» Preached conversion from sin, healed the sick and cast out demons.
- »» Befriended the poor and disenfranchised of his time.
- »» Died on a cross for the sins of the world.
- »» Rose from the dead after three days and ascended into Heaven.
- »» Showed us by His life, how to live and how to renounce selfishness and sin.
- »» Gave us the great commandment: to love God and to love others.
- »» Taught us about His Father's love for us.
- »» Sent us His Holy Spirit to be with us for all eternity.

Once I understood that the Jesus described in these stories is still alive in Heaven today, and that He wants a relationship with me, then I had to respond somehow. And as I responded by spending more time in prayer He seemed to draw me in, deeper and deeper. As I read the Bible I began to have a personal relationship with Jesus as a man and a friend, rather than just knowing about Him as a historical figure. I was able to see myself in the various stories and they became more real to me. The Bible became a living book, not just a historical story.

I came to realize that when Jesus, who is fully God, became man 2000 years ago, He left his claim to divinity in Heaven and walked the earth just as you and I do, fully human. In a similar way Prince Harry, the Prince of Wales, did not claim any royal privilege when he was serving his country in the armed forces; instead he put on army uniform and was treated by his peers like any other soldier. So it was with Jesus, when He was living on Earth. He did not rely on his Divine powers; He simply did what He heard His Father say and used the power of the Holy Spirit to guide His every step.

As a man, Jesus knew pain, hunger, and thirst. He also experienced rejection and betrayal and every human emotion including sadness, joy and even anger. When He awoke in the morning He did not know what the day would bring, He just allowed it to unfold, always listening in the Spirit to what His Father wanted Him to do. And today He wants to continue His mission on earth, but through each one of us. We have become His hands and His feet. He lives in us and through us, as the following scripture indicates.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

MATTHEW 28:19-20

This may feel like a daunting task; let's ask for His help:

Jesus help me to know you better. To really believe that you are the Saviour of the world, And my personal Saviour.

I am sorry that I have not always acted in ways that are pleasing to you; forgive me. I want to start again and live according to your will.

Jesus you came to save all peoples from sin and sickness, and to save me from my own ignorance of you.

Help me to love you, as you love me, and to love others, as you love them. Allow me to be a source of your love and light to this troubled world.

But mostly Jesus, enable me to have a personal, relationship with you. To know you as my Lord and Saviour, But also as my brother and friend. A friend who loves and supports me—despite my failures.

I believe that if I have this personal relationship with you, my cares and worries will be so much lighter, because this is what you have promised in scripture.

Come, Lord Jesus, fill me with your love, your Spirit. Jesus, I trust you to answer this prayer as I place my trust in you.

Further Meditation

Do you know Jesus personally, or do you just know about him?
Would you like to know him better, as a friend? Then ask Him, in your own words.

DAY 3
Welcoming the Holy Spirit

All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

JOHN 14:25-26

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.

ROMANS 8:11

In the original Hebrew text, the word commonly translated as Spirit is *ruach*, which means breath or wind. The Greek word that we interpret as Spirit is *pneuma* which means current of air, wind or breath. So the Holy Spirit can be thought of as the breath of God, the very life-force of God. We see from the scriptures that God breathed His life into creation: *And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (Genesis 1:1)*, and He breathes His Spirit into us again when we receive Him into our lives (Romans 8:11).

Jesus told us much about the Holy Spirit and the role of the Spirit today. He said the Holy Spirit will:

- »»Be our advocate (supporter, helper, and backer). John 14:25
- »»Teach us all things. John 14:26
- »»Remind us of everything Christ said. John 14:26
- »»Help us bear witness of Christ. John 15:26
- »»Reveal the righteousness of Christ. John 16:10
- »»Guide us in all truth. John 16:13
- »»Reveal the future to believers. John 16:13
- »»Be our counselor. John 16:16
- »»Convict unbelievers of their sin. John 16:16
- »»Empower believers with spiritual power. Acts 1:8
- »»Empower believers to be powerful witnesses for Christ. Matthew 28:20

In his devotional book *Unshakable Faith*¹ Pastor Rick Joyner writes that The Holy Spirit is the agent of God who does the work. He is ever moving, working and bringing forth the purposes of God. It is crucial for every Christian to know the Holy Spirit and learn how to follow Him in all things.

Scripture also teaches us that The Holy Spirit brings us the gifts of wisdom, understanding, counsel, power, and deep reverence for God (Isaiah 11:2). These gifts are confirmed and extended in 1 Corinthians 12-13 as gifts of wisdom, knowledge, expectant faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, discernment, speaking in tongues and the interpretation of tongues. This latter set of gifts, sometimes called the charismatic gifts, was bestowed by the Holy Spirit to the apostles at Pentecost and continues to be given to us today.

I will reveal more about this Pentecost experience and what it has meant to me in Day 15, but for now let's welcome the Holy Spirit and invite Him to be our guide, teacher and provider of every gift that we need.

Let's pray:

Holy Spirit I welcome you. Come open my mind and my heart, guide me and teach me in your ways, and lead me into deeper revelation of you...

Help me not to dwell on my own shortcomings, or focus on the evil I see around me, but experience your wisdom and love.

Give me the spiritual gifts I need, right now, to follow you. Fill me with your wisdom, understanding, counsel, and love of the Lord my God.

Come Holy Spirit, fill me with your love, your presence. Fill me with your power, and bring me into a personal relationship with you.

Come Holy Spirit, come!

Further Meditation

Do you know the Holy Spirit as your personal guide and helper?
Which of His special gifts would you ask for? Why?

¹ Rick Joyner, *Unshakable Faith*, Destiny Image, 2000, page 19.

DAY 4
Encountering the Father

Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

JOHN 14:23

The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

ROMANS 8:15

Have you ever struggled with the idea of God as your father? I certainly have. As a child I pictured The Father as someone to be feared rather than loved. I imagined Him as an ancient person with a white beard appearing with thunder and lightning; rather like Charlton Heston in the movie "The Ten Commandments". So in my ignorance, I concluded that The Father was not someone I wanted to spend much time with, or approach too closely! Yet Jesus taught us to call our heavenly Father, *Abba*. Many have suggested that in today's language this could be rendered Daddy. If you go to Israel today you can still hear young children calling their fathers, *Abba*.

In Luke chapter 15 verses 11-32 (the parable of the Prodigal Son), we read the story of the father and his rebellious son: how the son goes to his dad and asks for his inheritance. When he receives this fortune he goes off and squanders it by loose living. Yet his father loves him enough to let him leave and learn some of life's hard lessons for himself. When the son finally comes to his senses and returns home, his father greets him with great joy, forgives him even before he asks, and throws a great party for him. Don't we all wish for this kind of dad? One that is loving and compassionate; quick to forgive when we make mistakes.

Jesus came to earth in order to reveal His Father to us and He did so in the parable above. God our heavenly Father is a loving father and He is waiting for you and for me to come home. He is waiting to forgive us, to put His best robe around our shoulders and a ring on our finger. He is waiting to welcome us into His house for a heavenly feast that will last for all eternity.

A few years ago, I had an amazing encounter with The Father. Similar to a dream, or a vision, I experienced through my spirit that I was in the ballroom of a grand palace, rather like the Palace of Versailles in Paris. It was very ornate with rich tapestries on the walls, gold inlaid furniture, sparkling chandeliers and thick, lush carpets covering marble floors. And there was I, a small child in short pants. God The Father came in, smiled at me, and then picked me up by my hands and started whirling me around in a circular motion, like an airplane. Eventually we both became dizzy and collapsed to the ground laughing and giggling, and then He started to tickle me. This is how I picture The Father now, a total contrast to the stern authority figure I pictured as a child.

I suspect that many of us still have problems believing that God the Father is indeed a loving God. The problem may stem from the teachings you heard as a child or because of painful childhood experiences with your own biological father, or other authority figures. Maybe these words that Jesus spoke about His Father will help you reframe your understanding as they did for me.

I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.

No one can come to the Father except through me.

If you know me, you know my Father too.

From this moment you know him and have seen him.

JOHN 14:7

You must believe me when I say

That I am in the Father and the Father is in me.

JOHN 14:10

The Father and I are one.

JOHN 10:30

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father, may I call you Abba? I want to but Father I feel so unworthy.

Help me Father to know you as my loving Father, who loves me unconditionally, and wants only good things for me.

Help me to love you as Jesus loves you.

Father, forgive me, for I have sinned in what I have done, and in what I have failed to do. I am sorry, and want to change and do better.

I want to come home to you, Abba to be with you, now and forever.

I want to develop a closer relationship with you. Show me how, Abba, show me how.

Further Meditation

Can you picture Father God as your Abba, your Daddy?

What would you say to Him?

DAY 5

Acknowledging the Three-in-One God

*I believe in one God,
The Father, the Almighty. Maker of heaven and earth.
I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God.
For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven.
For our sake he was crucified, died and was buried.
On the third day he rose again, in fulfillment of the scriptures.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
The Lord, the giver of life.
Who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and Son He is worshipped and glorified.*

These words, taken from the Nicene Creed, were composed during the very early days of the Church in ad 325. They remain the foundation of Christian faith to this day. Non Christians and even some Christians may find these words baffling or even absurd. What do they mean for me, they wonder? What impact do they have on my life?

For me they mean that we worship one God. But this God exists as a complexity of three persons. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, equal in nature; but separate in purpose; they are coequal and coeternal—one God yet three individual expressions (persons) of that God. As I pondered this mystery over the years, I have found the following images helpful (though I am not sure that any human description can fully penetrate this mystery of the three-in-one-God; which we also call The Trinity):

First, suppose you went to the store and bought a family sized tub of Neapolitan ice-cream; made up of three flavours, vanilla, strawberry and chocolate. And suppose the flavours were combined together in one big swirl, so that when you scooped the ice-cream out of the tub you would find all three flavours in the same scoop. Would you not have a three-in-one serving of ice-cream; three flavours, one ice-cream?

The second image is that of a high mountain peak covered in snow and ice. This mountain has three prominent faces, and if we were able to hire a helicopter and fly around the summit we would see three very different faces. The first a sheer drop into a glacier below, the second a more

gradual rocky slope into an alpine meadow, and the third a craggy ridge leading to a lower summit. You would have experienced one mountain yet three very different aspects or faces.

I learned this third image from healing evangelist Benny Hinn at a conference I recently attended. He made the point that we humans are made in the image and likeness of God. *“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27)*. Then he went on to say that scripture also states that we too have three essential elements; body, soul and spirit. *“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole **spirit, soul and body** be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23)*.² So we too have a Three-in-One nature (spirit, soul and body); not equal to God’s, but reflective of Him.

Finally I had an experience of what The Trinity might be like. One night as I was in prayer I saw, with my spirit, a shaft of white light, and I had the sense that this was the presence of God. As I approached I could see that the light was actually three individual columns of light. The columns appeared to be like three persons standing in a circle holding hands, just enjoying each other’s company. In my spirit I sensed that they were Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As I approached even closer they parted and I was invited to enter into their circle. As I did so I felt an immense sense of peace and love; something words can hardly describe. How long I was in this state I do not know. When I “came to” I was at perfect peace and within my heart at least, the mystery of The Trinity had been resolved.

Let’s pray:

O God of mystery, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I thank you for revealing yourself in scripture, in nature and in the everyday experiences of life.

I cannot begin to say that I understand all that you are or all you have said and done. But I want to grow in faith and understanding of You.

Prepare a space in my heart that nurtures further knowledge of you. I open myself to you, right now and I ask you to teach me more.

More about the Father, my creator, more about Jesus, my saviour, more about the Holy Spirit, my teacher and comforter.

Lord God, I'm seeking more revelation of you, show me more.

Further Meditation

How do you relate to the 3-in-1 God?

² My understanding is that the soul comprises our mind, will and emotions—that is our personality. and the spirit is that place where we connect with God, see visions and communicate with Him. Our spirit is primary and is meant to provide leadership to the soul, which in turn leads the body. We are spirit, have a soul and live in a body.

This is just one of 40 devotions featured in the book Rise Up, by Michael Whate. Get the entire set today, for yourself or a friend!

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