

## Preface

Dear Friend,

When we first moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico, my wife, Lenya, and I were impressed to watch people paraglide off the 10,000-foot crest of the Sandia Mountains east of the city. They bounded off and dropped down, only to be caught up again by the thermal updrafts, soaring higher and higher. I even heard the story of one guy who rode the wind currents all the way to the Arizona border!

Just as the wind gave these daredevils the gift of flight, so the unseen power of the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to us as followers of Jesus Christ. But these enablings aren't meant for personal thrill-seeking; they're meant for spiritual service. They aren't toys for individuals as much as tools to build up the body of Christ. As the apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:7, "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all." That's what spiritual gifts are meant for—to minister to one another.

Moreover, these gifts are subject to the sovereign will of God. First Corinthians 12:11 tells us, "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills." The choice God has made regarding your gifts—and, yes, you have at least one—is the best choice. Like the old TV show *Father Knows Best*, we need to remember that our heavenly Father always knows best. He knows what gifts the body needs and what ministries are lacking, and He prompts gifted people to accomplish His purpose.

When it comes to spiritual gifts, it's important that you learn to *relax* in the Lord. Receive the gift God has given you, find out how it works, and operate in it. When you understand what gift you have, you can confidently rest, because your gift doesn't depend on your power, but God's empowerment. God loves to choose ordinary people and empower them to benefit others. The gift you exercise has the power to change a life, a direction, a course. That means God could use you to be His instrument. How exciting is that!

As a teacher at Calvary Preschool, it's important that you relax and renew your commitment to God, allowing the Holy Spirit to use you as an instrument to impart academic, social, and spiritual insight into the lives of children. Education is important, but so is empowerment by the Holy Spirit. Let's be people who do both for God's glory!

In His strong love,

Skip Heitzig  
Senior Pastor

## The Holy Spirit and Education

Before you read any further, take a moment to think about the teachers you've had throughout your life. Some were good, no doubt, and others...well, not so much.

Hopefully at some point you've had a teacher who influenced you to think deep thoughts, invited you to say great things, and inspired you to act in marvelous ways. Unfortunately, the opposite has probably been just as true for you: you've had bad teachers that bored you, bothered you, and blabbed on and on.

Have you ever stopped to think of what makes a teacher great? Is it their passion? Their clarity of thought or teaching style? Their love and compassion for students? Their command of the subject matter? The challenge posed by their class? It's probably a combination of all these things.

One thing that often slips our minds when thinking about the profound impact a good teacher—specifically, a Christian teacher—can have is their dependence on the Holy Spirit during the teaching process. True, some characteristics of good teaching can be learned, but just as many good teaching characteristics are found by listening to and being led by the Spirit.

Are you, as a Christian educator, sensitive to the Spirit's leading in the classroom, to the students being taught, and to the subject matter being communicated? I hope so, because, as we'll see, the person and work of the Holy Spirit are vitally important to the educational process.

Before we jump into the subject matter, let's boil this booklet down to its essential message: involve the Holy Spirit in your teaching process; listen as the Spirit leads; and allow the Spirit to shape you, your students, and the subject being taught.

Even though this is a simple message, it's not always an easy thing to do. How do we listen as the Spirit leads? The apostle Paul gave the answer: walk in the Spirit (see Romans 8; Galatians 5:16). The Greek word Paul used for *walk* is *peripatéo*. It means *to tread with, live with, follow, or be occupied with*. When we walk with someone, we are with them, occupied by their company, and traveling in a particular direction.

This is true with the Holy Spirit as well. Part of walking with the Spirit is being engaged with the things of God—His truth and His will. Like walking with a friend or family member, walking with the Spirit involves a person (*who* you're walking with), a purpose (*why* you're walking), and a plan (*what* direction you're going).

So join me for a walk as we learn about the person, purpose, and plan of the Holy Spirit in the teaching process.

## The Person

If you're going to walk with someone, it's a good idea to get to know the person you'll be spending time with so you can enjoy traveling together. And if this person is someone you'll be spending a lot of time with—namely, all eternity—then how much more you should be getting to know them! This is the case with the Holy Spirit.

Who exactly is the Holy Spirit? First, the Holy Spirit is a person, not a “thing” or “it.” In Christian theology, based on biblical teaching, the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead and has all the characteristics of personhood. He teaches truth, brings comfort, convicts, is grieved, and has a host of personal and divine qualities.

The Bible talks about three unique ways the Holy Spirit interacts with humanity. These can be described with the Greek prepositions *para*, *en*, and *epi*, translated as *with*, *in*, and *upon*, respectively. First, the Spirit convicts the world of sin and righteousness, pointing people toward Christ. In this interaction, the Holy Spirit is *with* humanity (see John 16:8).

Then, when we receive Christ into our lives and are saved, the Spirit comes to dwell *in* us (see John 14:17). This is when we become a Christian, a follower of Christ—also known as being born again or born from above (see John 3:3).

Finally, the Spirit comes *upon* the believer, comforting and conforming us into the image of Christ (see Acts 1:8). This is where the rubber hits the road—where the Holy Spirit empowers us for service.

The Holy Spirit is God, and He relates to the world in a personal, intimate fashion. In order to understand how education relates to the Holy Spirit, we have to understand the person and work of the Holy Spirit more in depth. Let's first take a look at the person of the Holy Spirit and then consider how His attributes inform and empower the teaching process.

### *The Personality of the Holy Spirit*

Personality is the dimension of a person that possesses the attributes, properties, and qualities of personhood, such as will, emotions, and intelligence. The Holy Spirit has all these things. The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit is a comforter (see John 14:16). Therefore, He is able to comfort and bring solace as a person. The Holy Spirit can also be lied to (see Acts 5:1-11), resisted (see Acts 7:51), and blasphemed (see Mark 3:29). It doesn't take much to conclude that biblically, the Holy Spirit is a being of personhood and has relational qualities.

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit can act as a person. He can speak (see Acts 13:2), intercede (see Romans 8:26), teach (see John 14:26), commune (see 2 Corinthians 13:14), strive (see Genesis 6:3), and guide (see Acts 16:6). The Bible implies the personality of the Holy Spirit by using personal pronouns like *He* (see John 14:26) to identify Him. The Bible is clear in its declaration that the Holy Spirit is indeed a person.

### *Attributes of Deity*

The Holy Spirit also exudes divine qualities. He is eternal (see Hebrews 9:14), omnipresent (see Psalm 139:7-10), omniscient (see 1 Corinthians 2:10), and omnipotent (see Luke 1:35), among other things. Additionally, the Bible refers to the Holy Spirit as divine (see 2 Corinthians 3:18) and attributes divine works to Him (see Genesis 1:1-2; Psalm 33:6). It's fair to conclude that in addition to possessing personality, the Holy Spirit is divine.

### *The Works of the Holy Spirit*

Jesus said in John 16:8 that the Holy Spirit will “convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” The Holy Spirit’s primary role is to impress on people the fact that they are sinners in need of a Savior and then point people to Christ, testifying of His redemptive nature.

But the work of the Holy Spirit doesn't end there. The Holy Spirit also regenerates the believer (see John 3:5), indwells the believer (see 1 Corinthians 6:19), seals the believer (see Ephesians 1:13), fills the believer (see Acts 2:4), empowers the believer (see Romans 8:2), guides the believer (see Galatians 5:16), and anoints the believer (see 1 John 2:27). In short, the Holy Spirit is the active agent with whom the believer has the most contact.

But the work of the Holy Spirit doesn’t end there, either. The Holy Spirit has been active throughout history by creating (see Genesis 1); bestowing artistic gifts (see Exodus 28:3); generating leaders (see Numbers 27:18); providing wise, kingly rule (see Isaiah 11:2); and, most importantly, defining an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, whereby Jesus was conceived, led, anointed, crucified, and raised in the power of the Spirit.

### *The Names of the Holy Spirit*

The names for the Holy Spirit also provide a glimpse into the role He has played and is currently fulfilling. Take for instance the name *the Holy Spirit*, which in itself offers a lot of information about who He is: *the* (*one and only*; a definite article) + *Holy* (*set apart, sanctified*) + *Spirit* (*immaterial, immanent*). Other names include the Spirit of grace (see Hebrews 10:29), the Spirit of burning (see Matthew 3:11), the Spirit of truth (see John 14:17), the Spirit of promise (see Ephesians 1:13), the Spirit of glory (see 1 Peter 4:14), and the Spirit of God (see 1 Corinthians 3:16).

The Holy Spirit is also likened to a dove (see Matthew 3:16), fire (see Acts 2:3), oil (see Luke 4:18), a seal (see Ephesians 1:13), water (see John 4:14), and wind (see John 3:8). Scripture is replete with insight into the person and work of the Holy Spirit. There are two names that specifically relate to how the Holy Spirit is involved in education: the Spirit of truth (see John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; 1 John 5:6) and the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge (see Isaiah 11:2; 61:1).

### **The Purpose**

Now that we have a sense of the person we're walking with, let's turn to the purpose of the walk. As mentioned above, the primary role of the Holy Spirit is to convict the world of sin and point them to Christ. However, the full-orbed ministry of the Holy Spirit involves much more. Generally speaking, the Holy Spirit communicates the truth of God, which is found in the person of Christ, God's Word, and the world (creation).

### *The Spirit of Truth*

As God is to love (see 1 John 4:8), so the Holy Spirit is to truth. Look at some of the things Jesus said about the Spirit and truth: "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16-17); "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me" (John 15:26); and finally, "When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak" (John 16:13).

Dr. Carl Henry said, "Truth is truth because God thinks and wills it; in other words, truth depends on the sovereignty of God."<sup>1</sup> Jesus Himself said the Holy Spirit is to lead, counsel, confer, and testify to the truth. So, while Christ is truth incarnate—the purveyor of reality—the Holy Spirit is the messenger and revealer of this truth. The Holy Spirit communicates—and is, objectively, the being—of all meaning and substance. He is the foundation of all facts, physical laws, and objective reality—all truth.

And all truth is dependent on what God has revealed in Scripture and the natural world. Dr. Henry wrote, "Since God is the source and ground of all truth, all truth is in some sense dependent upon divine disclosure...truth consists of cognitively meaningful propositions; the totality of these propositions constitutes the mind of God."<sup>2</sup> That's what the Holy Spirit does—communicates the mind of God and provides all mental, moral, and spiritual illumination to the world.

For the Christian educator, the pursuit of truth should be at the forefront of all they do. Christians are to think the thoughts of God, or at least diligently pursue to think the thoughts of God. These thoughts should include all academic, spiritual, and moral areas of investigation. Whether one is teaching Bible or geometry, objective truth is paramount.

How is one to teach a course or topic truthfully? For the Christian, the answer is by the Holy Spirit, through the inspired Scriptures. Scripture, as inspired by the Holy Spirit, is the guidebook or worldview on which we evaluate life and existence. It's through the Bible that we grasp the mind of God. I agree with Dr. Henry Morris that "there is no boundary or dichotomy between

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<sup>1</sup> Carl F.H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority: God Who Stands and Stays*, volume V and VI, Wheaton, IL, Crossway Books, 1983, 334.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 336.

spiritual truth and secular truth; *all* things were created by God and are being sustained by Him. Therefore, we can learn any aspect of truth only in accordance with His will to reveal it.”<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Jay Adams made a similar declaration: “Christian education depends on the Spirit’s illumination and application of His Book, the Bible, for the correct perception and relationship of every fact, and on His energizing power for living according to biblical truth in all aspects of life.”<sup>4</sup> The Holy Spirit inspires and conveys the truth, Scripture is the written truth, and the Christian teacher is to faithfully teach and uphold the truth in any field of inquiry.

### *The Spirit of Wisdom and Knowledge*

Isaiah 11:2 paints us a picture of the Holy Spirit: “The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.” The Hebrew word for *wisdom* in this verse is *chokmah*. It has several meanings, among them *knowledge, experience, intelligence, insight, and judgment*, but here the word encapsulates the whole range of intellectual and experiential states of being. The Hebrew word for *knowledge* is *binah*, which means *insight, prudence, or intelligence*. The Holy Spirit has all knowledge, from temporal and situational to divine. Divine knowledge belongs only to God; man doesn't have access to it. But there are three other types of knowledge that proceed from the Holy Spirit that mankind does have access to.

The first type of knowledge is *knowledge by acquaintance*. This relates to something directly involving one’s consciousness. For example, when I read a book, I know that book is right in front of me. I have a direct awareness of the actuality of an object. With this type of knowledge, the Holy Spirit knows what is truly objectively real. He knows what was created and how the created order is sustained. Therefore, His understanding is complete in the associational realm; He's acquainted with all that is objectively real.

The second type of knowledge is what Dr. J.P. Moreland calls *know-how knowledge*. This is best understood in terms of knowing how to do something: for instance, I know how to read and write. This kind of knowledge involves prescribed behavior and the ability to accomplish what you claim you can do. The Holy Spirit inherently knows all behavioral patterns and ambitions of knowing; His knowledge of the insights and acts of the will is exhaustive.

The third type of knowledge is *knowledge by description, or propositional knowledge*. It has more philosophical overtones and deals with content and statements. Take, for example, the statement “I know that Barack Obama is the president of the United States.” Whether or not this statement is correct (as proposed by the person), the Holy Spirit is acutely aware of its truthfulness; He knows the heart and motive of the person and is therefore cognitively knowledgeable of the proposition and inherently maintains the objective reality of such a

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<sup>3</sup> Henry M. Morris, *Christian Education for the Real World*, Green Forest, AR, Master Books, 1977, 29.

<sup>4</sup> Jay E. Adams, *Back to the Blackboard: Design for a Biblical Christian School*, Phillipsburg, NJ, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1982, 87.

statement.

The fourth type of knowledge is *divine knowledge*. This type of knowledge only relates to God. Man can't comprehend or grasp the complexity of it—and I don't believe he ever will. It's the glue that binds wisdom and knowledge together. King David declared such knowledge "too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it" (Psalm 139:6). Divine knowledge is the out-of-bounds icing on the knowledge cake; it is what makes God, God. Simply put, it's the knowledge that knows everything—the omniscience of God.

Both God and mankind can produce wisdom and knowledge and can have characteristics pertaining to them. But, just as with truth, God (specifically the Holy Spirit) is their ultimate source and infallible author. Only God infallibly defines and communicates true wisdom and knowledge and inherently possesses all truth. And since He knows all truth, He exhaustively knows all objects of knowledge and wisdom.

Man's knowledge, on the other hand, is limited. Mankind is only capable of learning objective realities that have been revealed by God. But despite his finite nature, man is still called to pursue knowledge and wisdom, and we know from God's Word that the beginning of wisdom is to have a reverence, awe, and fear of the Lord (see Proverbs 9:10).

According to Dr. Henry, God's knowledge is "more than comprehensive; it is also eternal (Acts 15:18)... Only God has perfect knowledge...and divine knowledge is timeless and rules our temporal succession."<sup>5</sup> Simply put, pure and objective divine truth, knowledge, and wisdom are from God; all untruth and error are not.

In his *Introduction to Philosophy*, Dr. Norman Geisler argues that the correspondence theory of truth is the most logically sound view of truth. The correspondence theory "holds that truth consists in some form of correspondence between belief or a sentence and a fact or state of affairs."<sup>6</sup> Don't be too intimidated by the sound of that—Geisler simply goes on to say that "we cannot accept any theory of truth which results in either relativism or agnosticism. The Bible clearly declares that man can know the truth, and will be held responsible for such knowledge."<sup>7</sup>

In the *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, Geisler hones in on the importance of truth for the Christian: "The nature of truth is crucial to the Christian faith. Not only does Christianity claim there is absolute truth (truth for everyone, everywhere, at all times), but it insists that truth about the world (reality) is that which corresponds to the way things really are."<sup>8</sup>

Herein lies the crux of our quest as Christian educators. We need to teach the truth of God as

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<sup>5</sup> Henry, 269-270.

<sup>6</sup> Norman L. Geisler and Paul D. Feinberg, *Introduction to Philosophy: A Christian Perspective*, Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Book House, 1980, 247.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

<sup>8</sup> Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Books, 1999, 741.

defined by God—it's important! Our task is to prescribe God's wisdom and knowledge to the objective reality of the world as it is. Dr. Robert Pazmiño wrote, "Knowledge easily breeds conceit, provides glib answers, and at best is incomplete. What matters more is spiritual wisdom expressed in a love that promotes the good of others and glorifies God."<sup>9</sup> He went on to cite Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:19 (that Christians might "know the love of Christ which passes knowledge") and explain how Paul "does not denounce knowledge but sees it being transcended through the work of the Holy Spirit, making the love of Christ a reality."<sup>10</sup> Educators must present a Christian worldview, a framework in which the world is understood.

This is where the Scriptures, as inspired by the Holy Spirit, are key. The Bible is the framework on which all knowledge, wisdom, and understanding rest. It's God's grand letter to humankind that contains the unfolding drama of creation, the fall, redemption, the church, and Christ's return. By the integrity of Scripture, we begin to uncover the hidden, or unwritten, elements of life and discover the principles of all physical, moral, and spiritual existence. We are inspired to seek the fruit of God's laws in the natural realm, to uncover the majestic work of His brilliant mind, and to replicate the wondrous beauty of His artistic hand. As Dr. Morris stated, "Scripture, taken in context, and properly applied...provides the basic framework and guiding principles within which all truth, wherever found, must be interpreted and utilized."<sup>11</sup>

It's by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in Scripture, in the natural realm, and in the hearts of men that wisdom and knowledge come to fruition. It's when a Christian teacher seeks the guidance of the Holy Spirit in prayer and in Bible study that wisdom, truth, and knowledge are manifested in all of life and thought. It's when you unify the principles that Christ is the truth and the Holy Spirit is the communicator of truth that a real foundation of truth and knowledge can exist. As Dr. Zuck wrote, "Since Christian education focuses on bringing about spiritually transformed lives, the teaching/learning process requires both the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Spirit. One without the other is inadequate."<sup>12</sup> Scripture and Spirit—you can't have one without the other!

### *The Gift of Teaching the Truth*

To teach is simply to cause to know a subject; to instruct or show; or to instruct by precept, example, or experience. On the other hand, the *gift* of teaching, though it includes these elements, also transcends them. According to the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians, teaching is a supernatural gift that's bestowed on the believer by the person of the Holy Spirit. According to Zuck, the gift of teaching ranks first after apostleship and prophecy, establishing its prominent role in the church and underscoring the importance of the educational ministry of the church.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Robert W. Pazmiño, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education*, Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Academic, 2008, 41.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Morris, 28.

<sup>12</sup> Kenneth O. Gangel and Howard G. Hendricks, editors, *The Christian Educator's Handbook on Teaching*, Wheaton, IL, Victor Books, 1988, 33.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 38.



Now, it has to be said that teaching propositional or general truth such as physics and art can be accomplished by someone who doesn't have the gift of teaching. This sort of teaching can be likened to the distribution of facts: ten plus ten equals twenty, Lincoln wrote the Gettysburg Address, mitochondria is the powerhouse of a cell, Bach composed the *Brandenburg Concertos*, Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet*, etc. Anyone with the knowledge of facts can translate them to another person. However, eternal and ultimate truth is best taught by one who has been inspired by the Holy Spirit to do so.

True, someone not gifted with teaching can proclaim, "Jesus rose from the dead," or, "Fibonacci numbers show us the pattern of God's handiwork." However, when someone who has the gift of teaching proclaims these truths, a divine transaction occurs. With the Spirit's gifting, the topic being discussed takes on eternal significance, regardless of what it is. A life can be changed and inspired because the Holy Spirit has supernaturally gifted a believer with the ability to communicate God's truth effectively, oftentimes offering profound spiritual insight along the way.

It's worth repeating: there is a difference between the conveyance of knowledge and truly inspired teaching. One translates facts (which is not a bad thing, but is insufficient); the other inspires the soul. It's true that the apostle Paul's discussion of this spiritual gift related mostly to *biblical* teaching, but, as we learned from the study of truth and knowledge, spiritual truth is found in any objective truth as revealed by God. Therefore, a Christian educator can, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, teach the multiplicity of calculus and electron atomic movement just as a pastor can teach the Word of God, and produce similar results: awe, wonder, and even conviction. The educator explains God's handiwork and physical governing laws; the pastor explains God's Word and its application in the life of the believer. Both are inspired, and both give God His due glory.

This is similar to how Dr. Adams explained the Holy Spirit's role in education: "The Holy Spirit educates differently.... His educational objective is not merely the acquisition of facts; it is not even the acquisition of truth. He has more in mind: He is concerned about what is done with that truth and what that truth does. His objective is changed lives."<sup>14</sup>

How do you know if a person's teaching is truly inspired? Look at their impact: Have lives been changed or inspired for the glory of God? If the answer to that question is yes, you can probably conclude they have the gift of teaching. If the answer is no, they might be a distributor of nothing more than useful information. The bottom line is that when the Holy Spirit inspires an individual, God will be glorified, regardless of the topic being taught.

Dr. Pazmiño stressed the role of the Holy Spirit in educational pursuits: "The Holy Spirit is the active agent in equipping and fulfilling Christian teachers to enable them to teach. Teaching is a

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<sup>14</sup> Adams, 89.

spiritual gift that enables Christ's body, the church, to mature and to minister effectively."<sup>15</sup> Pastor Chuck Smith expressed the same sentiment: "The purpose of the gift of teaching is to enable a believer's spiritual growth and development. Many people make the mistake in thinking that spiritual growth comes from experience alone; it doesn't. It is only as the Word of God feeds our spirits that real spiritual growth comes. That is why the gift of teaching is so vital and necessary in the church."<sup>16</sup>

These words should resonate with the Christian teacher. A teacher who is both inspired by the Holy Spirit and biblically informed brings spiritual growth and nourishment! Churches, schools, and Christian educational institutions need teachers who have been gifted by the Holy Spirit to communicate God's truth to the world. The spiritually gifted teacher must understand the truth being taught, rely on the Holy Spirit to inspire, and give God the glory for the results. As Chuck Smith said, "Great peace is the result of good teaching."<sup>17</sup>

## The Plan

Now that we have a sense of the person we're walking with and the purpose of our walking, what's the plan? What direction should we be walking? What path should we follow? When we walk with the Holy Spirit, we're naturally led to Jesus. Let's take a look at His model of education.

### *The Goal of Spirit-Led Education*

The end result of Holy Spirit-inspired teaching is a changed and inspired life. But what does a changed life look like? And what's the aim of Christian education? According to Martin Luther (an early advocate of Christian education), a child is to be trained for the fullest possible participation in the kingdom of God. Luther stated that "above everything else, bring up children in the fear and knowledge of God."<sup>18</sup>

The supreme goal of Christian education is to give students the opportunity to draw close to Jesus Christ, to be conformed into His image by the power of the Holy Spirit, and to live a life consistent with biblical truth. According to Pazmiño, "The spiritual dimensions of education are foundational in a New Testament perspective."<sup>19</sup> But this doesn't mean you should teach Bible classes all day long.

If we look to Jesus as our example, we find that He grew intellectually, physically, spiritually, and socially. The picture of Jesus as a student in Luke 2:40-52 illustrates the results of Spirit-led

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<sup>15</sup> Robert W. Pazmiño, *Principles and Practices of Christian Education*, Eugene, OR, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002, 32.

<sup>16</sup> Chuck Smith, *Living Water: The Power of the Holy Spirit in Your Life*, Costa Mesa, CA, The Word for Today, 2001, 207-208.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>18</sup> Gustav Marius Bruce, *Luther as an Educator*, Eugene, OR, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002, 213.

<sup>19</sup> Pazmiño, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education*, 39.

teaching and provides a model for a Spirit-led student and classroom.

### *A Spirit-Led Student*

The first thing we learn about Jesus in this portion of Scripture is that He was Spirit-led; the Holy Spirit played a pivotal role in His education. Verse 40 says that Jesus was “strong in spirit.” He was guided and filled with God’s truth as inspired and taught by the Spirit Himself. Jesus was also “filled with wisdom” (v. 40). His knowledge was based in the reality and truth of God. Though we don’t know specifically what the Spirit was teaching Him, we can be sure it revealed the attributes of God’s person and plan. And finally, “the grace of God was upon Him” (v. 40). God’s favor was leading Him; God had a purpose and goal for His Son.

Students willing to emulate Jesus’ example as a student will inevitably mature as the Holy Spirit leads. As Dr. Zuck wrote, “A prayerful attitude, an open and obedient heart, and a yielded spirit ready to appropriate biblical content—these are essential if students are to become learners.”<sup>20</sup>

### *A Spirit-Led Classroom*

The second thing we learn about Jesus as a student is the type of environment that engaged Him. Verse 46 details several important aspects of a good classroom atmosphere. First, Jesus was “sitting in the midst of the teachers”; He was engaged in the conversation. This implies a student-teacher interaction. Second, Jesus was “listening to [the teachers].” Undoubtedly, He was listening to what they were saying and checking it with the truth of what the Holy Spirit was teaching and showing Him. Third, He was “asking [the teachers] questions.” He was interacting with the thoughts and propositions posed by the educators. We can’t be sure that the teachers were giving correct information, but we do know that the end result of their time with Jesus was that they were astonished (see v. 47). Probably part of that astonishment came from Jesus’ correct understanding of God and truth, as well as the fact that one so young could be so wise.

This passage of Scripture is a great example of the Holy Spirit influencing and leading a classroom environment. Dr. Pazmiño wrote, “Interaction with the environment must include the supernatural environment where God’s presence and/or work may intrude upon development to bring out a result that is not directly attributable to what has gone before. This recognizes the place of transformation and conversion through the sovereign operation of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit may build upon and/or negate existing elements of development in ways that bring a creative and dynamic integration which otherwise was not possible.”<sup>21</sup>

### *The Results of Spirit-Led Instruction*

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<sup>20</sup> Gangel and Hendricks, 41.

<sup>21</sup> Pazmiño, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education*, 216.

Now let's look at the final results of Spirit-led teaching. Verse 52 says that Jesus "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." This was holistic growth. Jesus didn't just grow mentally or spiritually; His whole person grew. That's the end result of Spirit-led education: ministry to the totality of a person. To me, it's comforting to think that the Lord loves all of me and wants to redeem and use every nuance of my being: my physical strength, my mental capacities, my spiritual person, and my relationships with others. He wants every part of me to reflect Him. A Spirit-led education should eventually lead to forming a person into the image of Christ—mentally, spiritually, socially, and physically.

But teachers need to rely on the Holy Spirit to accomplish the Lord's will in the lives of their students. They should encourage students to be open to the Holy Spirit, faithfully showing them that God has a purpose for their lives. They should also learn to foster an environment that engages the whole student by asking questions, probing for answers, challenging the students with biblical truth, and sitting among them, serving and ministering with whatever means available.

Instructors also need to anticipate that the Holy Spirit will accomplish His purposes in the lives of students. Teachers should be eager to give God the glory when their students begin to grow spiritually, intellectually, socially, and physically and begin to think, act, and live a little more like Jesus. After all, the goal of Christian education is to help students know and love God, not just know about Him.

Unfortunately, according to Dr. Zuck, some teachers elevate the academic process to the point of forgetting the "frailties of man's fallen nature," praising man's creativity and methods over God's, and failing to acknowledge that only the Holy Spirit can accomplish God's purposes. Other teachers emphasize the work of the Spirit too much, de-emphasizing the work of human teachers and implying that education is "the enemy of spirituality" and "a work of the flesh" at odds with the work of the Spirit.<sup>22</sup> Another false view is that the Spirit "suddenly zaps the teacher or learner with spiritual insight. This, however, places the teaching/learning process in a subjective, mystical realm, neglects the place of the Scriptures, and overlooks other elements involved in the learning process."<sup>23</sup>

## **Putting It All Together**

We've discussed the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the purpose of teaching, and the plan we're to follow. How do you put it all together? It's a simple answer that requires a disciplined follow-through: trust the Holy Spirit, study the Bible, and obey. Put another way: seek inspiration from the Holy Spirit as to what and how you teach, find the biblical principles and texts that guide and shape your topic, and then do the intellectual and practical formulating—prepare and do.

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<sup>22</sup> Gangel and Hendricks, 33.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

Some of us have more trouble doing these things than others. But true Spirit-led teaching incorporates all three areas. If you're lacking in one of them, ask God to provide a means and inspiration to fulfill the mission of teaching—ask Him for the knowledge to accomplish the task (see James 1:5). The Christian teacher's task is to reveal God's heart and plan to the world generally and to their students specifically. What better place to get this information than from God Himself! What's more, we have the helper, the Holy Spirit, who leads us into all truth.

That being said, there are some practical ways you can learn to live out your mission as a Christian educator. Dr. Arthur Holmes said it well: "A Christian understanding of things is not thereafter achieved by some mystical illumination unrelated to rational considerations. The Holy Spirit illuminates the Christian mind by witnessing to the truth taught by the Scriptures, not independently thereof and not without the intellectual work involved in studying the biblical revelation."<sup>24</sup> In other words, you have to do your homework.

I believe there are a myriad of applications for the principles discussed in this booklet. You can draw out any number of ideas and, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, be inspired to apply them in ways I haven't mentioned. Here are a few thoughts on doing that.

Just as the personality of the Holy Spirit permeates His ministry to individuals, so you can teach personally. Seek out the qualities and individuality of each student, and get to know them. Let them know they are loved by God and by you. As Dr. Howard Hendricks wrote, "It's your compassion that produces the learner's motivation. If I sense you love me, I'll be eager to do all kinds of things you want me to do. Why did the disciples follow Jesus? It's simple. He loved them."<sup>25</sup>

Remind your students of the work of the Holy Spirit, and counsel them in the great truth that they can "do all things through Christ who strengthens [them]" (Philippians 4:13). Teach them about God's helper, the third person of the Godhead who is available to counsel, convict, and reveal truth to them. Let them know that God has a plan and purpose for their lives and that He can accomplish whatever He wills for them. Great things happen to a life submitted to Christ.

From the qualities and names of the Holy Spirit, specifically when it comes to truth and knowledge, teach your students that there is objective truth and that this truth is revealed in Scripture and in God's handiwork in the natural realm. Encourage your students in all academic and practical endeavors to seek out God's fingerprints, whether it's in the sciences, literature, art, history, homemaking, carpentry, auto mechanics—whatever it happens to be. As Dr. Holmes stated, "We are persons equipped by God with rational, moral, and artistic powers to invest for our Maker."<sup>26</sup> Encourage your students to discover how God created things, marvel at His mind, ponder His artistic beauty, and ultimately give Him glory for the entirety of His

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<sup>24</sup> Arthur F. Holmes, *The Idea of a Christian College*, Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987, 18.

<sup>25</sup> Gangel and Hendricks, 40.

<sup>26</sup> Holmes, 15.

accomplishments in the universe (see Psalm 8).

When it comes to the *gift of teaching*, educators need to pray that God blesses them with this gift. If they acquire it, lives will be changed and inspired; if they don't, they'll simply be giving information to students who desperately need inspiration (for more information on this topic, see your pastor for guidance and counsel).

In *Spirit-led education*, the task is clear: put the biblical principles into practice. Engage your students with questions, listen to them, be in their midst, invest your life to change a life, and then watch God grow them in amazing ways.

Dr. Holmes stated that a Christian commitment to education “should be a liberating experience that enlarges the horizons, deepens insight, sharpens the mind, exposes new areas of inquiry, and sensitizes our ability to appreciate the good and beautiful as well as the true.”<sup>27</sup> He went on to say that “all of a young (or I may add old) person’s human potential must be as fully developed as possible, if the stewardship of his or her life is to honor God. The Christian has a mandate in education.”<sup>28</sup> And Christian teachers have a mandate to educate God’s people. They must bring the wisdom and truth of God to the hearts and minds of those being taught. Teachers must seek the wise counsel of God’s Word, study diligently, and most importantly, rely on the Holy Spirit to lead and guide.

## **Appendix: The Attributes of God**

One of the dangers of presenting a Spirit-based philosophy of education is that the other persons of the Godhead seem to take a backseat in the discussion. This is not my intention. I firmly believe that the triunity of God’s person (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) can teach us incalculable things about the education process. For the sake of clarity, in this next section I want to offer a glimpse of the totality of the Godhead as involved in the education process, thus allowing for a distinctly Trinitarian view of education.

One of the best ways to appreciate the vastness of God is to look at His attributes. Attributes are the terms that describe the character of God. Without getting into too much detail, there are two types of attributes God has: moral and metaphysical. Attributes begin with God’s pure actuality (that He exists) and flow from His simplicity (that He is one, without parts, indivisible). By looking at His attributes, we get a picture of His plan and purpose in relation to man and reality.

One of the foundational attributes of God is His creative and sovereign character. It was He who, along with the Son and Spirit, created the universe and everything in it (see Genesis 1). Physical reality came into being and continues in Him and through the Godhead; He gives it

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 22.

meaning and purpose. Put another way, history was sovereignly created and is providentially directed. God is the cause and Creator of the universe, the author of truth and all good things.

This means Christians should employ their mental, spiritual, and bodily faculties in all areas of educational inquiry and the pursuit of God's truth, both in the Word and the world. The universe belongs to the Lord, and we as His children are able to study it, analyze it, and seek His mind in relation to all things. The Father is the substance and source of all that is; the privilege of studying His handiwork in creation, moral law, etc. is an ongoing adventure, unraveling mysteries for Christians to pursue and investigate.

To learn about God, you have to begin with the Bible. The Bible contains God's revelation of Himself, both in the Old and New Testament. He is forever unchanging, and the Bible is the source of discovering His fixed character and person. Even though God's ways are forever beyond ours, we still should study His revelation of Himself to learn from and apply those truths accordingly. In discovering the character of God, Christian educators can learn about the heart of God for students and for all people.

God the Father is *immutable*—He is unchangeable. His nature remains the same throughout all existence. From an educational standpoint, this is good news. What we teach students about God and the created universe is true for this age and all ages. God's character, will, and person are perfect and trustworthy in all areas and fields of inquiry. How God reveals Himself in the Bible, nature, history, and so forth will be steadfast and unmovable.

God is also *eternal*; He never had a beginning and will never have an end. This attribute relates to His immutability. God's eternal state and unchangeable nature suggest that His providential view of reality (history, science, etc.) is perfect and therefore open for investigation, study, and academic focus.

God is *immaterial*. His person is not wrapped up in the physical; He is Spirit. But just because God is Spirit doesn't mean that Christian educators should not study the physical realm. On the contrary, we should study it because the physical realm is God's handiwork—His creative act. God's immaterial nature simply means that the physical world is not an end in and of itself; there is more beyond. Because there is a spiritual world, Christian educators must teach about the spiritual realm: God, angels, Satan, and so forth. Likewise, Christians must teach about the spiritual nature of man, including his soul, his need for salvation, ethics, the fruit of the Spirit, and more.

Another one of God's many attributes is that He is *immense*, literally, *not measurable*. God is not limited to space or time; He is present everywhere and at all times. He is transcendent, also known as omnipresent. This is an exciting attribute of God for educators, because it means there is no end to understanding His handiwork. Our educational pursuits here on earth are a constant inquiry into space, time, and knowledge; we will never "figure out" God or the entirety of His ways. Even when we learn something new or discover a new law, there will always be

something original we have yet to discover about the immensity of God and the world He created.

The Father is also *all-powerful*, or *omnipotent*. God's omnipotence is important in helping us understand that He has the power to transcend the created order. He can invade space with miracles; He can invade time with Himself (Christ); and He can change the flow of history, laws, and nature. It's because of His power that we can accept the naturally unexplainable events in life and trust that they can—and do—occur.

The Father is *omniscient*. He knows everything past, present, and future; there is nothing He cannot or does not know. There is nothing we, as humans, can teach Him. For an educator, this is great news! When you abide in God, you can know you're abiding in an unfailing reality. When you teach His ways, you are resting in truth and complete knowledge. There is nothing you can think, say, or do that surprises Him. In an ultimate sense, He is the very definition of the Christian existence, the living reality of who we are.

God is *wise* (in Hebrew, *chakam*). He doesn't just know all things; He knows the right course to take, one that is profitable and good. Much of the Bible is made up of God's wisdom—the teaching of the “good life.” As educators, we should constantly pursue God's wisdom. We should search it out in Scripture, seek it in prayer, and teach it to our students. In Him are the wise words, actions, and sources of what is good, true, and beautiful.

God is also *ineffable*. He is majestic, beautiful, and worthy of praise, honor, and exaltation. This is a key area for educators to understand and implement. We need to cultivate an atmosphere of worship in song, words, actions, and all of life. Humans were created to worship God, and worshiping Him not only gives us purpose, meaning, and pleasure, but it also cultivates the life of the Spirit—an element that secular education doesn't provide. In worshiping God, we begin to understand His worthiness, His beauty, and His love for all creation. In return, He blesses His children and opens up a sea of grace, mercy, and love; He gives us Himself.

God is *righteous* and *holy*. He is set apart from the created order; He is perfect. Understanding God's righteousness is essential. In doing so, we come to see that God is perfectly good and we are not; our sinfulness becomes clear to us and reveals our need for a Savior. We as educators need to teach God's perfection and righteousness not only as truth, but as a means to understand the sinful nature of humanity as well as God's judgment of sin and unrighteousness. The topic of righteousness is a good segue into discussing issues of right and wrong—why something is deemed wrong, and why something is deemed right. It can also act as a springboard to discuss larger cultural issues of meaning, law, art, music, and so on.

Finally, God is *love*. His character is omnibenevolent, that is, all-loving and all-good. His affection toward His creation and children is one of goodwill and tenderness; He is full of mercy and compassion. Love is to be the reigning characteristic of Christian educators. Love for God, family, and students is a necessity in Christian education. It should be the fruit of all fruits that



determines our disposition as well as our actions—the hidden, unifying answer for all relationships, actions, and yearning. After all, love is what makes the stars and galaxies spin.