

# *Help Is Here*

Finding Fresh Strength and Purpose  
in the Power of the Holy Spirit

MAX LUCADO



THOMAS NELSON  
*Since 1798*

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It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all.

—JESUS (JOHN 6:63)

*With great joy I dedicate this book to*

*Dr. Pete Ledoux*

*Child of our good Father, lover of the Spirit,  
follower of Jesus, and servant of people.*



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And to you, the reader—Blessings on you! I am so honored that you would entrust me with a few minutes of your time. I do not take the privilege lightly. Be equally assured I’m aware of my limited understanding. To ponder the Spirit is to ponder an endless ocean of beauty. No one comprehends the depths. The words of Bernard Ramm are spot-on:

There is a hiddenness to the Spirit that cannot be uncovered. There is an immediacy of the Spirit that cannot be shoved into vision. There



## *ACKNOWLEDGMENTS*

is an invisibility of the Spirit that cannot be forced into visibility. There is a reticence of the Spirit that cannot be converted into openness. For these reasons one feels helpless, inadequate, and unworthy to write a line about the Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

The Spirit defies comprehension yet welcomes the attempt. This is mine. May it encourage you.



# *Preface*

**L**et's imagine you're on a vacation. You load the car and drive to a mountain village hotel. Clean air. Splendid vistas. Cool weather. It's going to be great. Besides, this hotel is offering an end-of-season special that fits your budget. This is your chance to do what you've always wanted to do: hike the mountain trails.

On the first morning you're the first person out the door. No sleeping in for you, no sirree. Pack on back. Water bottle full and enthusiasm level high. Trail map in one hand, walking stick in the other. What fun!

The fun is short lived. The trail is steep. Your new hiking boots are stiff. A few minutes up the trail you wonder, *Did someone stuff sandbags in my backpack?*

You step to the side of the path to catch your breath. That's when

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you hear the trail guide and his happy followers. He wears a wide-brimmed hat and speaks with a confident tone that makes you think he knows his stuff. He identifies the names of the flowers, describes the history of the trail, and shares a few tips on the best way to have the best day of hiking.

His followers aren't carrying gear, so they walk at a fast clip. The guide points out wildlife along the way and pauses to answer the hikers' questions. You consider tagging along and eavesdropping. But you didn't pay for a guide. Besides, you couldn't keep up.

Within moments the group is way ahead. You lag behind with your increasingly uncomfortable load.

After a few miles you catch up. They are sitting in a meadow, listening to the guide describe the vast mountain range. And they are eating lunch! Sandwiches, chips, sodas, and cookies. Are those homemade chocolate chip cookies? It's a feast!

You sigh and wonder if the PB&J you brought is going to be soggy. No matter. You've lost your appetite. You turn and head down the trail. Enough misery for a day.

The next morning your muscles ache and your feet are swollen. It takes the better part of an hour and a box of Band-Aids to cover your blisters. Off you go to try a different trail. Day two is a mirror image of day one. The trail is steep too soon. Your legs are tired too fast, and if the backpack felt full of sandbags yesterday, today it feels as though it contains concrete blocks.

And guess who you hear coming up the trail behind you? That's right. The cheerful guide and his gaggle of fortunate followers. You step to the side of the trail and let them pass. One of them is whistling. A couple are chatting. The guide makes a joke, and the others laugh.

And you? Think arthritic pack mule.

Within a few miles you come upon the group again. They are, you guessed it, sitting in a meadow, eating a picnic lunch, enjoying a nature presentation.

PREFACE

“We have homemade ice cream,” the guide announces. “Let’s eat it up!”

You grumble something about the inequities of life, turn around, and walk back to the hotel. You spend the afternoon watching reality TV and eating your PB&J.

Days three and four? Identical to days one and two.

On day five you don’t even leave the hotel lobby.

You are minding your own business when you hear someone call your name. You look up. It is the hiking guide.

“I’ve been looking for you,” he says. “Where have you been?”

“What?”

“I’ve been hoping you would be a part of our daily hikes. They are included in your package. The lectures. The food. It’s all a part of the deal. Maybe you didn’t read the brochure we sent.”

“I guess I didn’t.”

“We take care of everything. We truck your pack up the trail so you don’t have to carry it. We have a team that prepares a gourmet meal. And, well, you get *me*. I know these trails better than anyone. My job is to lead you into the high country.”

“Really? How did I miss that?”



There is a weariness among us. We are weary from the loads we carry and the challenges we face. We have questions we cannot answer and problems we cannot solve. We’d hoped that life would be an invigorating pilgrimage, a high-country adventure. We never expected to grow so tired so soon.

We grow weary on the walk.

Yet what if there is help? Someone to walk with you and guide you, to shoulder the load.

And what if this help was heaven-sent? Not another person who,

*PREFACE*

like you, is prone to blisters and leg cramps. Someone who is ever strong. Never tires. Always near. Unhindered by what hinders us.

Interested?

Pack away the Band-Aids and PB&Js. No more blisters for you, my friend. A better climb awaits.

## CHAPTER 1

# *The Holy Who?*

*We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.*

—ACTS 19:2

*And now I will send the Holy Spirit upon you, just as my Father promised. Don't begin telling others yet—stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven.*

—LUKE 24:49 TLB





I began attending church as a youngster. Gung ho and willing to tackle the mountain, I was barely into double-digit years before I was reading my Bible, memorizing scriptures, and doing my dead-level best to obey every command I heard from the pulpit. I hoisted the backpack of good Christian living and set out to scale the lofty peaks of morality, spirituality, and devotion.

*Always tell the truth.*

*Never lag in faith.*

*Pray more.*

*Do more.*

*Believe more.*

Believe me, I tried. But, boy, did that trail grow steep. Peer pressure, raging hormones, and guilt conspired to convince me I'd never make it. Can a fifteen-year-old suffer spiritual burnout? This one did.

Maybe you know the feeling.

The fire in your belly is running low on kindling. But where is the firewood?

It's not for lack of searching. The Lord knows you've tried. At least you hope he knows. You've signed up and stood up for everything you know to be right and good. Yet why this cold wind in the face? Why this uphill struggle? These gray skies? This empty spot?

Something's missing, and for the life of you the life of you feels as if it is fading.

Drip by drip. Little by little. Day by day.

If that is you, can we talk? Can we start with this? The Lord does know. He does care. It is not his will that you lead a lifeless life. He has something—no, Someone—you need to know.

I do not recall being told about this source of strength. I don't fault anyone. After all, I owned a Bible. I could have searched the pages. Yet had you asked me to explain him to you, I would've just shrugged and said, "The Holy Who?"

Ask people, "*Who is God the Father?*" They have a ready reply. Or "*Describe God the Son.*" Most will not hesitate to answer. But if you want to see someone hem, haw, and search for words, ask, "*Who is the Holy Spirit?*"

Part of the challenge is found in the terms. God as *Father*? We comprehend that image.

God as Jesus, the *Son*? That idea is manageable as well.

But God as *Spirit*? The word itself is mystical.

I do recall an early encounter with him.<sup>1</sup> I was wrapping up my senior year of high school when a wonderful thing happened in our small West Texas town. An evangelist from a far-off country called California showed up in a school bus that had been painted to look like a flower garden. He was a convert in the Jesus Movement that was sweeping the country in the early 1970s. He wore shoulder-length hair and bell-bottom jeans. He set up camp in the school parking lot and began preaching about Christ and the power of the Spirit. By that time in my life, I'd abandoned the steep mountain trail of spirituality. The only spirit I knew came in the form of a liquor store bottle. The

hippie preacher invited a group of us to attend a Bible study in homes and learn more. So I went to one.

The address I was given took me to a trailer house on the edge of town. I didn't know anyone there, but everyone was very kind. We sat on the floor, read from the book of Acts, and for the first time that I can recall, I heard someone describe the work of the Holy Spirit. The exact words I've long since forgotten. But the sentiment I readily remember: The Spirit is your life-giving friend, here to lead you home.

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The Spirit is  
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When we prayed, a couple of people prayed in a language I'd never heard. They asked if I'd like to pray in the same manner. I said, "Yes." I tried, but nothing happened. Even so, I was impressed. These people didn't seem trail weary. They were invigorated. Their eyes lit up when they spoke about the Spirit.

You might expect my story to take a dramatic turn at this point. A Damascus road moment, perhaps. Saul becoming Paul. But, alas, there was no bright light in the trailer park. I didn't become an apostle or write epistles. Quite the contrary. I was so convinced that I was unqualified to walk with the Spirit, I didn't even try.

More years of prodigal living ensued. The pigpen became my home address, and the other pigs were my tribe. Worse still, I continued to call myself a Christian, hopping nightclubs on Saturday nights, sitting in a pew on Sunday mornings. I was the hypocrite who turns others away from Christ.

In my early twenties a dear man, who eventually became a dear friend, helped me believe that God's grace was greater than my rebellion. I knelt at a church altar, trusted heaven's mercy, and set out on the trail again. Forgiveness became my message, my life story. I changed my career path, went through seminary, and served churches

in Miami and Rio de Janeiro and eventually settled down as a pastor in San Antonio, Texas.

That's where the wheels came off again.

If you think the trail of Christian living is steep for a youngster, it is even more so for a minister. I resolved to study hard, counsel wisely, solve problems, organize committees, and satisfy each cranky member. I maintained a game face for three or four years, but somewhere in my midthirties I ran out of fuel. Suddenly I could not sleep. How does a person lose the ability to sleep? I'd climb into bed and listen to the relaxed breathing of my wife. I'd imagine my three young daughters snoozing in their beds down the hall. I'd think about my friends and coworkers, each of whom was resting peacefully. Our dog was sleeping. Our goldfish was sleeping.

And me? My mind was racing, a Ferrari on a time trial. I thought of members to be called, decisions to be made. On more than one Sunday morning, I stood before the church having had little, if any, sleep. I was desperate.

Was this the season in which I found the Holy Spirit? Sort of. It would be more accurate to say the Spirit found me.

In those late-night hours when I could not sleep, I would climb out of bed, pad down the stairs, and kneel at our couch and pray. Dejected figure I was. Not Max the pastor. Not Max the church leader. That fellow in the crumpled pajamas was Max the depleted, confused disciple.

My prayers were moans. My faith was a frazzled thread. I couldn't even summon the energy to fake it. I was honest. Honest to God, I was. Turns out God has a soft spot for an honest prayer.

Little by little I began to sense the Spirit. He led with a kind touch. He wooed with a whisper. Mysterious? By all means. But figment of my imagination? No. Not at all.

I requested strength. He gave it. I asked the Spirit to heal the sick. More than once he did. I prayed for vitality and joy. Both returned. The long winter thawed into a welcome spring.

## THE HOLY WHO?

One day while studying for a message, I read the words Jesus used to describe the Holy Spirit: *comforter* and *friend*. I recall having this wonderful realization: “I know that Person.”

That was three decades ago. I no longer think of the Holy Spirit as the Holy Who. I now call him our Heaven-Sent Helper. He is the ally of the saint. He is our champion, our advocate, our guide. He comforts and directs us. He indwells, transforms, sustains, and will someday deliver us into our heavenly home.<sup>2</sup>

He is the executor of God’s will on earth today, here to infuse us with strength. Supernatural strength.

Was this not the promise of Jesus? He would not let his followers begin their ministries unless they knew the Holy Spirit. “Don’t begin telling others yet—stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven” (Luke 24:49 TLB).

By this point the disciples had spent three years in training. They had sat with him around campfires, walked with him through cities, witnessed him banish disease and command demons. They knew his favorite food, jokes, and hangouts. But they were not ready. They’d seen the empty tomb, touched his resurrected body, and spent forty days listening to the resurrected Christ teach about the kingdom. But they needed more.

“You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8 NKJV).

Mark it down. The Holy Spirit comes with power. Power to make good choices, keep promises, and silence the inner voices of fear and failure. Power to get out of bed, get on with life, get busy about the right things in the right way. Power to face the unexpected, unwanted passages of time. Power. This is what Jesus promised then, and this is what Jesus promises still.

How is your power level?

Perhaps you have all the power you need. Life is a downhill stroll

through a pleasant meadow. You never lack energy, enthusiasm, or strength. Your step has a spring to it; your voice has a song to it. You are ever the joyful, empowered person.

If that describes you, can I recommend a book on honesty?

If that doesn't describe you, consider the possibility of a life-giving relationship with the Holy Spirit.

No more walking this path alone. No more carrying weight you were not intended to bear. It's time for you to enjoy the presence of the Holy Spirit and experience the vigorous life he offers.

Your Bible makes more than a hundred references to the Holy Spirit. Jesus says more about the Spirit than he does about the church, marriage, finances, and the future. Why the emphasis on him? God does not want a bunch of stressed-out, worn-out, done-in, and washed-up children representing him in the world. He wants us to be fresher day by day, hour by hour.

But let's be careful. The topic of the Holy Spirit seems to bring out the extremists among us. On one hand there are the show-offs. These are the people who make us feel unspiritual by appearing super-spiritual. They are buddy-buddy with the Spirit, wear a backstage pass, and want everyone to see their healing gifts, hear their mystical tongue. They make a ministry out of making others feel less than godly. They like to show off.

On the opposite extreme is the Spirit Patrol. They clamp down on anything that seems out of line or out of control. They are self-deputized hall monitors of the supernatural. If an event can't be explained, they dismiss it.

Somewhere in between is the healthy saint. He has a child-like heart. She has a high regard for Scripture. He is open to fresh strength. She is discerning and careful. Both he and she seek to follow the Spirit. They clutch with both hands this final promise of Jesus: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8 NKJV).

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stressed-out, worn-out, done-in,  
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Is it your desire to know the Holy Spirit better and to nurture your relationship with him? Then you and I are on the same page.

Scripture employs more than a dozen metaphors to describe the work of the Spirit. In fact, it is a testimony to his grandeur that one metaphor will not suffice.

Do you want to be wowed by Jesus? The Holy Spirit is the ultimate *teacher* (John 14:26).

Do you struggle to obey God's commands? The Spirit is the *wind* of God (John 3:8).

Do your prayers seem weak? He is our *intercessor* (Rom. 8:26).

Unsure of your salvation? He is the *seal of heaven* upon the saint (Eph. 1:13).

The Spirit is the *dove of peace* who calms us, the *gift giver* who equips us, the *river of living water* who flows out of us to refresh the world (Matt. 3:16; 1 Cor. 12:1–11; John 7:37–39).

The list goes on. Over the next few pages we will ponder the amazing benefit of the divine presence. Whether this is a fresh encounter or your first encounter, it does not matter. God wants you to have the energizing strength of the Holy Spirit.

Some time ago I was driving from one place to the next when I realized my gas tank was nearly empty. My indicator said I had less than ten miles worth of fuel. I spotted a convenience store and parked next to a pump. I placed the nozzle in my tank, swiped my card, and began filling up my car. I then set out to do all the things we do at such locations. I went into the store and bought a soda. I chatted with the store clerk. I thought about buying a hot dog but reflected on its contents and decided not to do so. I went back to my car and washed the windshield and emptied some trash out of my car. I removed the nozzle from the gas tank, climbed into my car, and was barely back on the road when I happened to look down at my gas gauge. It was on empty!

I'd like to say the pump clicked off prematurely. Knowing me and my attention span, however, I probably forgot to squeeze the lever.



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The Spirit is the *dove of peace* who calms us, the *gift giver* who equips us, the *river of living water* who flows out of us to refresh the world.

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*HELP IS HERE*

I did everything except for the one thing I needed to do.

Does that describe your life? Have you forgotten the one thing you need to do? Have you neglected the Holy Spirit?

The Spirit of God longs to give you his great power. He will guide, teach, and energize you. He will shoulder the burdens you were never intended to carry.

Challenges come with life, but they need not define your life. Help is here.

CHAPTER 2

*Come  
Alongside Me*

The Spirit As a Teacher

*He will teach you all things, and bring to your  
remembrance all things that I said to you.*

—JOHN 14:26 NKJV



I can't recall the fellow's name. Marco? Flavio? Luigi? It was an Italian name, for he was an Italian. He had that rugged Mediterranean look about him: dark hair, olive skin, and a handsome smile. He wore loose-fitting slacks, a silk shirt, and loafers. Pretty classy clothes. Then again, he was Italian.

He studied history in the university and made a living by leading tours through Rome. When our family had the opportunity to see the city, a friend of a friend of a friend gave us his name. He asked us what we wanted to see. Catacombs? Colosseum? Statues of Caesar?

Of course we wanted to see all of those. But the site at the top of my list, my *numero uno*, was the Sistine Chapel.

His eyes lit up. Do you know that classic Italian gesture of kissing the tips of the fingers as if something is of exquisite taste? He did it and said, "The Sistine Chapel. I will take you there."

He knew everything: the quickest route to the Vatican, the shortest lines in the Vatican, the names of the guards of the Vatican. He

talked the entire time, all about the Sistine Chapel. The story of Michelangelo, the scaffolding, and the painting on the ceiling that forever changed the way we see Western art.

He walked fast, spoke faster. By the time we arrived, I wondered if the chapel would live up to its billing. It most certainly did. We craned our necks and looked up at the ceiling. After a few moments I glanced in his direction. He was smiling. He was thrilled that we were thrilled. He had this see-I-told-you expression on his face. For a few moments he said nothing. But then he scurried over next to me and in a whispered voice appropriate to the location pointed out details I would never have noticed without him. He walked me over to the corners to get a better view. He used Italian terms, but he was so enthused I didn't ask him to translate.

He changed the way I saw the chapel. I had admired it from afar. I had appreciated it from a distance. But on that day I was thrilled by it in person.

Wouldn't it be great if someone could do for the story of Jesus what this Italian did for the chapel?

If only we had an expert to teach us. Someone who knows Christ the way my friend knew the Sistine Chapel. Someone who can reveal him and remind us about him. Someone whose assignment is to stir in us a thrill about our Savior.

That Someone is alive and well. While I cannot recall the name of the fellow in Rome, Jesus made sure we all would learn the name of the Helper he left in charge. He called him the *Paraclete*. The word appears only five times in Scripture, and of those five times Jesus used it four, and he did so on the night before his crucifixion.<sup>1</sup>

I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper [*Paraclete*], to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. . . .

COME ALONGSIDE ME

The Helper [*Paraclete*] . . . whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. . . .

When the Helper [*Paraclete*] comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. . . .

It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper [*Paraclete*] will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment . . .

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (John 14:16–17, 26; 15:26; 16:7–8, 13–14)

So much in these passages deserves our attention.

Look at the unity of the Trinity. The Son will ask the Father, and the Father will send the Spirit. There is a happy cooperation at work here as if to say all of heaven sends help in the direction of the disciples of Jesus.

Also take note of the pronoun. Jesus doesn't want us to think of the Holy Spirit as an it or a thing. The Spirit is a person. And, like a person, the Spirit has intellect, emotions, and will. The Spirit speaks to the churches (Rev. 2:7), intercedes for the believer (Rom. 8:26), leads and commands the disciples (Acts 8:29; 16:6–7). The Spirit appoints elders (Acts 20:28), searches all things (1 Cor. 2:10), knows the mind of God (1 Cor. 2:11), and teaches the content of the gospel to us (1 Cor. 2:13). The Spirit dwells among and within believers (1 Cor. 3:16; Rom. 8:11; 2 Tim. 1:14), distributes spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:11), and gives life to those who believe (2 Cor. 3:6). He cries out from within our hearts (Gal. 4:6) and leads us in the ways of God (Gal. 5:18). He

helps us in our weaknesses (Rom. 8:26), works all things together for our ultimate good (Rom. 8:28 THE MESSAGE), and strengthens believers (Eph. 3:16). He can be lied to (Acts 5:3–4), grieved (Eph. 4:30), insulted (Heb. 10:29), and blasphemed (Matt. 12:31–32).

This list would surprise most people. According to one study only four people in ten believe that the Spirit is a divine person. The rest of those surveyed either don't have an opinion or choose to believe the Spirit is more like a power surge than a divine being who empowers and teaches us.<sup>2</sup> That's regretful. How does one have a friendship with electricity?

Can you join me in a pledge? I hereby resolve never to call the Holy Spirit an it. The Spirit is a person. And Jesus calls him the *Paraclete*.

Translators land on different, yet similar, translations for this Greek word: "Comforter" (KJV), "Counselor" (ESV), "Advocate"

(NEB), "Intercessor" (margin of the NASB). The Phillips translation interprets the name as "someone else to stand by you." The renderings may vary, but the central message is the same. We are not alone.

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The Spirit has a specific, overarching mission. His task is to teach us about Jesus.

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Yet to what end? Is the Holy Spirit simply a divine companion who keeps us company? If so, that would be

enough. Yet the Spirit has a specific, overarching mission. His task is to teach us about Jesus.

*He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. . . . When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. . . . he will convict the world. . . . When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but*



COME ALONGSIDE ME

*whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.* He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and *declare it to you.* (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:8, 13–14, emphasis mine)

Who would have imagined! The invisible presence of God on earth invites you to enter his classroom and learn from him.

The apostle Paul echoed this point in one of his letters. “No one’s ever seen or heard anything like this, never so much as imagined anything quite like it—What God has arranged for those who love him. But you’ve seen and heard it because God by his Spirit has brought it all out into the open before you” (1 Cor. 2:9–10 THE MESSAGE).

Secularists look for answers in human philosophy and knowledge. The world religions look to the teachings of their now-dead founders: Muhammad, Buddha, Confucius. Christians, however, hold to this inscrutable and beautiful promise: our teacher not only spoke, but he speaks. He taught, yes, but he teaches still. His wisdom is not confined to an ancient document but is a part of the day-to-day curriculum of our mentor, the Holy Spirit.

As Paul goes on to say:

The Spirit, not content to flit around on the surface, dives into the depths of God, and brings out what God planned all along. . . . God offers a full report on the gifts of life and salvation that he is giving us. We don’t have to rely on the world’s guesses and opinions. We didn’t learn this by reading books or going to school; we learned it from God, who taught us person-to-person through Jesus, and we’re passing it on to you in the same firsthand, personal way. . . . Isaiah’s question, “Is there anyone around who knows God’s Spirit, anyone who knows what he is doing?” has been answered: Christ knows, and we have Christ’s Spirit. (1 Cor. 2:10, 12–13, 16 THE MESSAGE)

## HELP IS HERE

We are not left alone with our questions. It is not up to us to solve the riddles of our existence. We have a helper, a divine instructor. He will save us from the cul-de-sac of confusion and the dead end of doubt. He does this by enrolling us in the primary course of his university: Jesus Christ. Look again at the Upper Room message:

The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in *my name*, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance *all that I have said to you*. . . . When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, *he will bear witness about me*. . . . When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. *He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.*" (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13–14, emphasis mine)

The chief aim of the Spirit is to escort you into the Sistine Chapel of Jesus and watch you grow wide-eyed and slack-jawed. He will enchant you with the manger, empower you with the cross, embolden you with the empty tomb. He will infect you with his love for the Savior.

He is downright bullish on Jesus.

J. I. Packer points this out beautifully, saying, "It is as if the Spirit stands behind us, throwing light over our shoulder, on Jesus, who stands facing us. The Spirit's message to us is never, 'Look at me; listen to me; come to me; get to know me,' but always, 'Look at *him*, and see his glory; listen to *him*, and hear his word; go to *him*, and have life; get to know *him*, and taste his gift of joy and peace.'"<sup>3</sup>

As Jesus foretold, "[The Spirit] will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:14).

A classic example of this truth involves an encounter between two men: Peter, a devout Jew, and Cornelius, a God-fearing, God-seeking

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Gentile. They met several years after the ascension of Jesus. Their meeting was a complete surprise to Peter. Jews had nothing to do with Gentiles, especially those who served with the Roman army. Cornelius was an outsider. He didn't quote the Torah or descend from Abraham. Toga on his body and ham in his freezer. Uncircumcised, unkosher, unclean. Look at him.

Yet look at him again. He was kind and devout. "One who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always" (Acts 10:2 NKJV). Cornelius was even on a first-name basis with an angel. The angel told him to get in touch with Peter, who was staying thirty miles away in the seaside town of Joppa. Cornelius sent three messengers to fetch Peter. Peter, however, resisted.

But then "the Spirit said to him, 'Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them'" (Acts 10:19–20 NKJV).

The Spirit threw open the door of the gospel to welcome, not just the Jews, but the entire world.

Peter already knew that Jesus loved non-Jews. He had spent three years following Christ. Yet he needed a reminder. The Spirit gave it. "He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance [remind you] all things that I said to you" (John 14:26 NKJV). The phrase "bring to your remembrance" can mean "make contemporary."<sup>4</sup> The Spirit does more than repeat the words of Jesus; he makes them relevant. He unfolds their significance for the world in which we live.

I recall an afternoon early in my ministry when the invitation of Jesus to the weary became the invitation of Jesus to Max. I was supposed to be studying. But I could not concentrate. I was in the throes of the weariness I described in the last chapter, battling insomnia, a dozen insecurities, and deadlines. I was under the impression that I had to fix everyone's problems, shoulder everyone's burdens, and never grow weary in doing so. After some moments I moved from my office chair into the chair I used for guests. I bowed my head and sighed.

When I did, this scripture came to mind: “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28 NASB).

It was the pronoun *me* that got me. I had been turning to everyone and everything but him. The words of Jesus went from ink on a page to balm for my soul.

Why did that verse come to mind? Simple. The Holy Spirit, my teacher, reminded me. The Spirit of Christ will do this for you, my friend.

And when the Spirit whispers in our ear . . . and makes us aware that Jesus is for real and his invitation is for real also, then he is fulfilling a further ministry, a *matchmaker* ministry, whereby he urges us, draws us, inclines us, moves us, to embrace the Lord Jesus, to say yes to his invitation, to go to him and make him, by faith, our own Savior, our own Lord, our own friend, our own king.<sup>5</sup>

Is this not great news! The Spirit, the Person present at creation, the one active in incarnation, the moving force in the resurrection, the mighty hand at the final revelation—he is your tutor. He will reveal new and wondrous things to you.

I came home the other day to find my wife, Denalyn, on the floor playing with our two grandchildren. She had purchased a half-dozen brightly colored, matchbox-sized cars. As I walked in, she was pulling them out of the bag. Rose and Max went crazy. That’s what you’d expect of a four-year-old and a twenty-month-old toddler. Rose knew what to do. She recognized them as self-propelling cars. She took one and rolled it back and forth until the stored energy allowed the car to zip across the floor.

Max, on the other hand, had never seen them. The idea was new to him. Denalyn was thrilled to thrill him. She was on the tile floor, teaching Max how to roll the car back and forth until it was ready to be launched. When it exploded forward, oh how he laughed with

glee. And when he laughed, Denalyn laughed twice as loud. She was so excited to see him excited.

The Paraclete wants to do the same with you. He will be a Denalyn to your world. The question is, Would you be a little Max to his? My grandson modeled the attitude we need—a childlike spirit. Hungry to be taught. Willing to be led. Humility is the soil out of which the fruit of the Spirit can grow.

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Humility is the soil out of which the fruit of the Spirit can grow.

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Invite him into your world. Let your day begin with these words: “Welcome, Holy Spirit!” Make it your aim to walk in the Spirit by inviting him into the details of each day. “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25 NIV). Let this prayer be quick to come to your mind: “In this moment what are you teaching me?” Or, “How am I to respond to this challenge, Lord?” Or, “Direct me, please. Which way should I go?” Pause and listen. Keep an ear inclined toward the Spirit.

I once participated in a golf outing that included caddies. It was amazing. My caddy not only carried my bag, he offered to tell me how to play. As we walked down the first fairway, he said, “I’ll show you where to hit the ball and which club to use.”

“How do you know?” I asked.

“I’ve been caddying here for twenty years.”

I stopped, turned, and looked at him. “Twenty years? How many rounds of golf is that?”

He looked up at the sky as if he was calculating. “Around ten thousand.”

Ten thousand! He knew each blade of grass by name. Every turn of the green and roll of the hill—he had experienced them. I asked, “Is there anything about this course you do not know?”

“Nope. I could play it in the dark.”

*COME ALONGSIDE ME*

So I peppered him with questions. How far should I hit this shot? He told me. Will this putt roll very fast? He told me. Should I quit golf and take up bowling? He told me. He told me because I asked him. For me not to consult him would have been foolish.

For us not to consult the Spirit of God would be the same. He is here to teach us. Our privilege is to stay in mindful communion with him. Day by day. Moment by moment.

Follow him into the Sistine Chapel of Jesus Christ. Listen as the divine instructor whispers wonders in your ear. Be assured that, as you smile, the Spirit smiles with you. After all, he is your teacher.





CHAPTER 3

# *Raise Your Sail*

## The Spirit As Wind

*You send your Spirit, and new life is born to  
replenish all the living of the earth.*

—PSALM 104:30 TLB

*Not by might, nor by power, but by my  
Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.*

—ZECHARIAH 4:6



**K**atie Spotz and Laura Dekker have much in common. Both are endurance athletes. Both have boats. Both made headlines when they completed solo trips, Katie across the Atlantic, Laura around the world. Yet for all they have in common, there is this massive difference. One rowed; the other sailed.

Twenty-three-year-old Katie rowed, rowed, rowed her boat from West Africa to South America. Her 2,817-mile trip required seventy days, five hours, and twenty-two minutes. Her nineteen-foot yellow wooden craft was built to withstand hurricanes and fifty-foot waves. She was spared the hurricanes. The waves, however, kept her up at night. She packed half a million calories worth of freeze-dried meals, granola, and dried fruit. She rowed eight to ten hours a day and battled painful calluses.<sup>1</sup>

Laura Dekker, on the other hand, harnessed the power of the wind. In 2012 she became the youngest person to circumnavigate the globe solo. She used a two-mast, forty-foot sailboat named *Guppy*. The trip was not without its challenges. A court in the Netherlands, her native country, attempted to prevent it. Once at sea she had to

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sidestep reefs and survive numerous storms; her journey required one year and five months. But she made it.<sup>2</sup>

I do not plan to follow their examples. Endless days alone in the open water? I'd prefer a root canal with no pain killer. However, if forced to choose between rowing and sailing, I know my preference.

Do you know yours?

Spiritually speaking, which best describes your vessel? A rowboat or a sailboat?

The question is significant. We encounter stiff winds. Here is what God tells us to do:

Care for the poor.

Comfort the confused.

Tell the truth.

Forgive jerks.

Pray constantly.

Serve unselfishly.

Pursue morality.

We are called to be . . .

good stewards of money,

good spouses to our mates,

good members of society,

good caretakers of the environment, and

good employees in the workplace.

God challenges us to . . .

find our gifts and use them,

find the lost and reach them,

find the prodigals and bless them,

find the confused and counsel them, and control our tempers, lusts, greed, arrogance, tongues, laziness, appetites, and grumpy attitudes.

Are you tired yet? We'll sooner empty the ocean with a thimble than fulfill these assignments. Change the world? Why, most days we can't even change ourselves!

A friend tells about the day his ten-year-old son ran away from home. After being gone the entire day, the boy walked up the driveway with his head hung low. "Son," the father asked, "what did you learn today?" The boy answered, "I learned that everywhere I go, I take me with me."<sup>3</sup> Don't we all?

We take our greed, our selfishness, our wounds and warts. We dare not think for a moment that we have the power to be the person God wants us to be. But nor do we dare to think that God will fail to give it to us. He empowers us to be what he calls us to be. This was the promise Jesus made to a certain religious leader who paid him a late-night visit.

"Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews" (John 3:1). There were only six thousand Pharisees in Israel. Nicodemus was numbered among them. There were only seventy-one clerics on the high counsel; he was one of them. Jesus even called him "the teacher of Israel" (v. 10), implying a special status. Nicodemus was as religious as a Southern Baptist Convention.

"This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him' " (v. 2).

He was careful and tactful. Careful to come at night, lest he be spotted conversing with the upstart rabbi. Tactful to flatter, lest he fail to make a good first impression. Jesus, however, was not careful nor tactful. He was forceful. Though Nicodemus asked no question, Jesus gave him an answer. "Jesus answered him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God'" (v. 3).

Keep in mind, Jesus was talking to a bishop of sorts. If religion were an academic enterprise, Nicodemus would have had a wall full of diplomas. Jesus was unimpressed with his credentials. He told Nicodemus, “You must be born again,” as if to say, “Go back to the beginning and start over.”

A bit radical for someone as finely frocked as Nicodemus. The Pharisee was taken aback. He questioned, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” (v. 4 NASB).

Nicodemus spoke only four sentences in this brief conversation. In those four sentences he used the word *can* four times:

“No one can . . .” (v. 2)

“How can . . .” (v. 4)

“Can he . . .” (v. 4)

His final question will appear in verse 9 with yet another: “How can these things be?”

Nicodemus was obsessed with what a person can and cannot do. He was all about human effort, human gumption, human achievement. In his view the gate to heaven was greased with elbow grease.

Jesus, to the contrary, made four references to human *inability*. Absent the help of heaven, we . . .

1. cannot see (i.e., experience) the kingdom of God (v. 3),
2. cannot enter the kingdom of God (v. 5),
3. cannot give birth to the Spirit (v. 6), and
4. cannot discern the movements of the Spirit (v. 8).

This is a classic conversation. On one side Nicodemus, representing all well-meaning, God-fearing, Bible-toting, law-abiding, tax-paying, tithe-giving, candle-lighting, pew-sitting, scripture-memorizing, boat-rowing folk. On the other, Jesus Christ.

And what the latter says to the former is so *uncanny* that it sends

shock waves through church pews and synagogues to this very day. “I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life” (3:5–6 NLT).

The phrase “Kingdom of God” refers to a relationship with God in this life and entrance into heaven in the next. This is high stakes! How do we receive citizenship? Be born again.

In our first birth we become brand-new humans. In our second birth we become brand-new creations. And who oversees our second birth? The Holy Spirit!<sup>4</sup> Indeed, were it not for the work of the Spirit, the new birth would be impossible! “No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:3 NIV).

If Nicodemus was having trouble keeping up with Jesus’ comments, we can hardly fault him. He’d barely said, “Good evening,” and Jesus, in rapid fire, told him about a new kingdom, a new birth, and the power to experience them both. But Jesus was just getting warmed up.

“The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8). When it came to describing the Holy Spirit, Jesus had a universe of metaphors at his disposal. Comets. Galaxies. Ocean depths. Beluga whales. And out of the entire glossary, he chose this word picture to give to Nicodemus: wind. It’s easy to see why.

The Spirit, like wind, is an unseen force.

Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper dedicated years and more than a thousand pages to the study of the Holy Spirit. The first chapter of his book is entitled “Careful Treatment Required” and contains this paragraph:

Of Him nothing appears in visible form; He never steps out from the intangible void. Hovering, undefined, incomprehensible, He remains a mystery. He is as the wind! We hear its sound, but can not tell

whence it cometh and whither it goeth. Eye can not see Him, ear can not hear Him, much less the hand handle Him.<sup>5</sup>

The Spirit is wholly holy and unlike any being in our world.

Which is such good news! We need alien assistance, a source of strength that is unbuffeted by that which buffets us, undisturbed by that which disturbs us, untethered to whatever ties us down. The Spirit is not subject to weather patterns, aging bodies, pandemics, stock market swings, or despots. He has never been sick. He will never be afraid. He does not worry, strive, or struggle. He is the Holy Spirit, marked by mystery and characterized by majesty.

“The wind blows where it wishes . . .” (v. 8).

In like manner the Holy Spirit answers to no government or organization. He does not report to a president, priest, prince, or pastor. He blows where he wishes. Mighty enough to clear a path. He can break down walls of prejudice and subdue the most stubborn heart. Yet gentle. So soft as to barely rustle a leaf. A roaring wind at Pentecost. A still, small voice at Mount Horeb.

The Spirit is like the wind. Had Jesus stopped with this comment, Nicodemus would have had plenty to ponder. Yet Jesus went on to stretch the imagination of Nick and Max and all people who have tried to quarry the jewels that follow.

“So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit” (v. 8).

That which is born of a vegetable is a vegetable. That which is born of a dog is a dog. That which is born of a fish is a fish. And that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. That is to say, we have his wind, his unseen power, within us. We host the mystery and majesty of God.

What we cannot do, he can. Stop and think about something you struggle to do. What uphill climb is taking your breath? Forgiving an enemy? Solving a problem? Breaking a habit? You can't do it? The Spirit can. You have the force of heaven's wind within you.

I consider myself to be a bit of an expert on the force of wind. I was



raised in windy country. Springtime winds average twelve miles per hour in my hometown. (There is an oft-told joke about a West Texas rancher who returned from a trip to New York City with a swollen nose. He was so accustomed to leaning into the wind that when there wasn't one, he kept falling on his face.)

Some enterprising entrepreneur thought a buck could be made off this wind. He set up a sailboat-for-rent business on the shore of the city lake. The sailboats were the length of a surfboard with a single mast and sail. My friend James and I were among the first customers. Neither of us knew how to sail, mind you. West Texas generates wind, not sailors.

We climbed aboard and shoved off. Or did we shove off, then climb aboard? Either way we floated out onto the lake and for a few delightful moments enjoyed life on the high seas. But then our momentum ceased. I looked at James, and James looked at me, and we shrugged. We had no clue how to untie the mast or hoist the sail. So we did the only thing we knew to do. We jumped into the water, positioned ourselves behind the boat, and got to work.

The image of two clueless teens kicking their way to the dock might serve as a picture of many well-intentioned Christians. We spend every drop of energy self-propelling our way to shore.

Jesus invites us to hoist the sail.

Row-boat Christianity exhausts and frustrates. Those who attempt it are left depleted and desperate at the attempt. Those who let the Spirit do the work, on the other hand, find a fresh power. Life still has storms. The water grows rough. But they are not left to face the fury on their own.

Nicodemus was fixated on the word *can*. The Christian is fixated on the word *done*. The work of salvation is done. God helps those who admit they cannot help themselves.

Does that describe you? Can I urge you, if you have not done so already, to believe on him whom God has sent. Trust Jesus to do

the work that only he can do. Rely upon the Holy Spirit to quicken within you a new spirit, a new creation. No more ceremony. No more huffing and puffing. Gone is the endless list of dos and don'ts and the deadening thought that having done much, you haven't done enough. No more coming to Christ in the dark of the night in fear.

Come to him in the light of a new day! In the power of a new you.

A few nights ago our neighborhood experienced a power outage. Not a power shortage, mind you, but a power outage. Electricity was cut off. The line between the generator and the residences was severed. There was no electricity. None. Nada. Zilch. Zero. Had a meter reader come to our house, he would have seen no activity on the gauge.

Lamps, dark. TV, dark. The AC went off. The microwave did not work. The refrigerator was on its way to becoming an oven. The ceiling fans went still. Denalyn and I, from one instant to the next, went from a room alit with lights to a dark, silent cave.

Fortunately we knew exactly what to do. Younger, less experienced individuals might have been bewildered, befuddled, or afraid. Not the missus and me. We've been around long enough to know how to react. We sprang into action.

Denalyn oversaw the ceiling fans. She grabbed a ladder and, with the aid of a flashlight, began to spin the blades. She rotated the fan as ferociously as she could. "Are you feeling the air?" she asked me between huffs and puffs.

"Not yet, sweetheart. Keep it up. You'll ventilate the house soon." I needed her to succeed. I was working up quite a sweat with the light switch. Thinking I could generate power with activity, I flipped the switches on and off, on and off, on and off. No luck, but I was not discouraged.

I stood in front of the TV and set in motion mission number two: activate with screaming. "Come on! Get after it! Do your job. We want to see some color, hear some voices, watch some programs."

The lack of response only deepened my resolve. I realized I could

# Notes

## Acknowledgments

1. Bernard L. Ramm, *Rapping about the Spirit* (Waco, TX: Word, 1974), 7. On the matter of the difficulties in studying the Holy Spirit, see also Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, unabridged, one-volume ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1983), 846–48.

## Chapter 1: The Holy Who?

1. Is the Holy Spirit a he? A she? The answer is neither. The Holy Spirit did not take on human form. No gender applies to the third member of the Trinity. The word *spirit* is both male and female in Hebrew, neuter in Greek, and only becomes male in Latin. Many writers find it helpful to avoid gender references altogether and only refer to the Spirit as “the Spirit.” For the ease of reading and to follow the example of Jesus in John 14–16, I occasionally refer to the Spirit as “he.” (I initially attempted to rotate between “he” and “she” but found that approach to be jarring.) To be clear, however, the Spirit is beyond our gender limitations. I trust the reader will keep that in mind and the Spirit will bring that truth to our minds as needed.

## NOTES

2. Comforts (Acts 9:31). Directs (Acts 13:2, 4; 15:28; 21:11). Indwells, transforms, sustains, and will someday deliver us into our heavenly home (Rom. 14:17; 15:13; 1 Cor. 12:3; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; Jude 20–21).

### Chapter 2: Come Alongside Me

1. The fifth occasion is 1 John 2:1.
2. Lifeway Research, *2018 State of American Theology Study, Research Report*, <http://lifewayresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Ligonier-State-of-Theology-2018-White-Paper.pdf>, p. 3.
3. J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit: Finding Fullness in Our Walk with God*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 57, emphasis in the original.
4. Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 867.
5. Packer, *Keep in Step*, 212–13.

### Chapter 3: Raise Your Sail

1. “Katie Spotz,” Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katie\\_Spotz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katie_Spotz); Christopher Maag, “Woman Is the Youngest to Cross an Ocean Alone,” *New York Times*, March 14, 2010, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/15/sports/15row.html>.
2. “Laura Dekker,” Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura\\_Dekker](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Dekker).
3. This story came from Bill Frey, a friend.
4. “The work of salvation never started with the efforts of any man. God the Holy Spirit must begin it. Now, the reasons no man ever started the work of grace in his own heart are very apparent: first, because he cannot; second, because he won’t. The best reason of all is because he cannot; he is dead. The dead may be made alive, but the dead cannot make themselves alive, for the dead can do nothing.” Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon on the Holy Spirit* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker, 2000), 16.
5. Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, trans. Henri de Vries (London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1900), 6.

### Chapter 4: Groans of the Heart

1. Jurgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992), 51, as quoted by Leonard Allen, *Poured Out: The Spirit of God Empowering the Mission of God* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University, 2018), 164.
2. “The Full Story of Thailand’s Extraordinary Cave Rescue,” BBC News,

## NOTES

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### Chapter 5: A Sure Salvation

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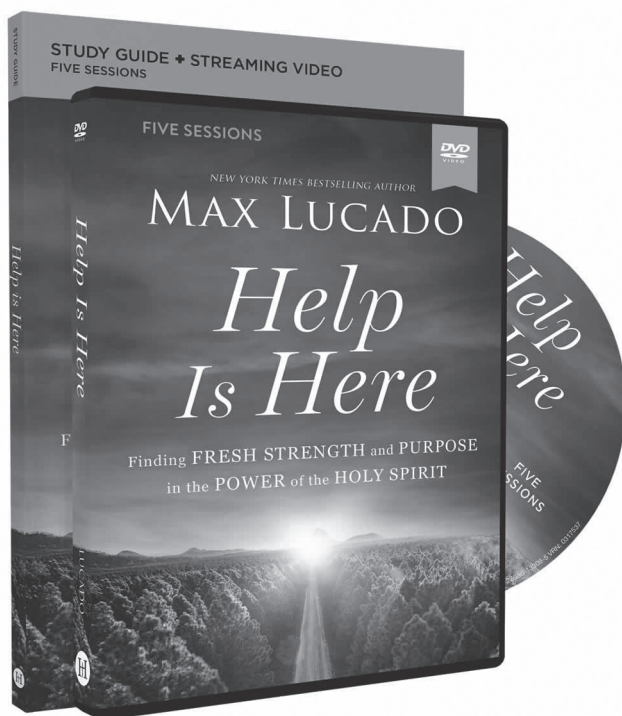
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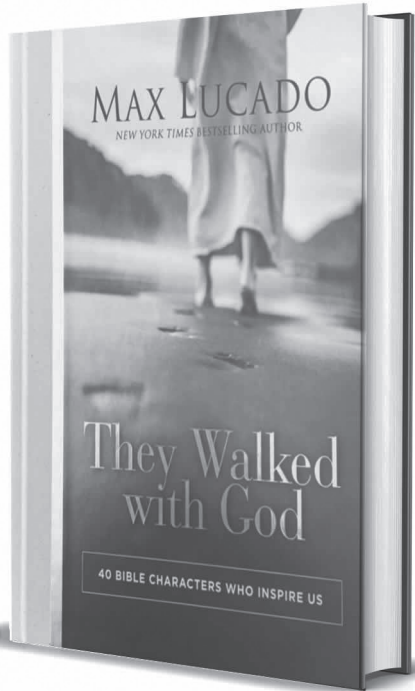
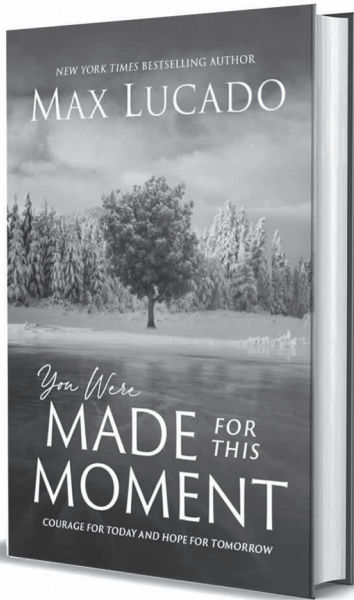
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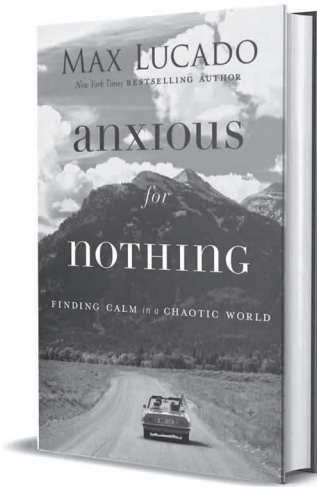
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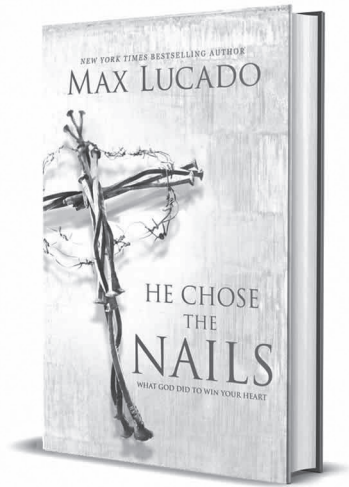
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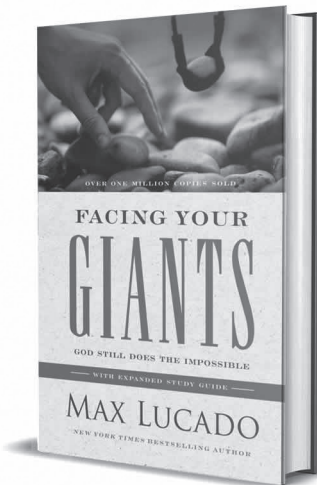
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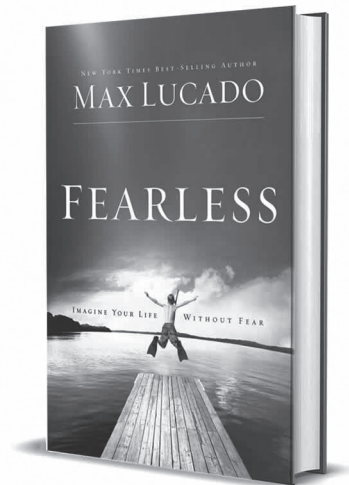
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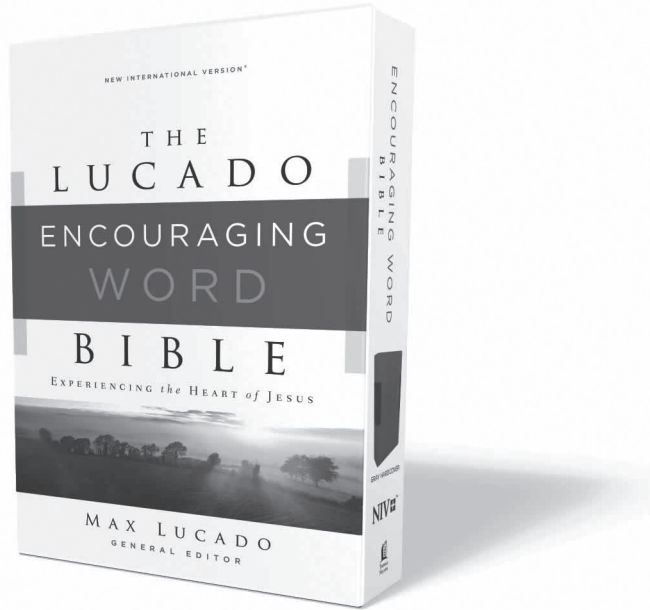


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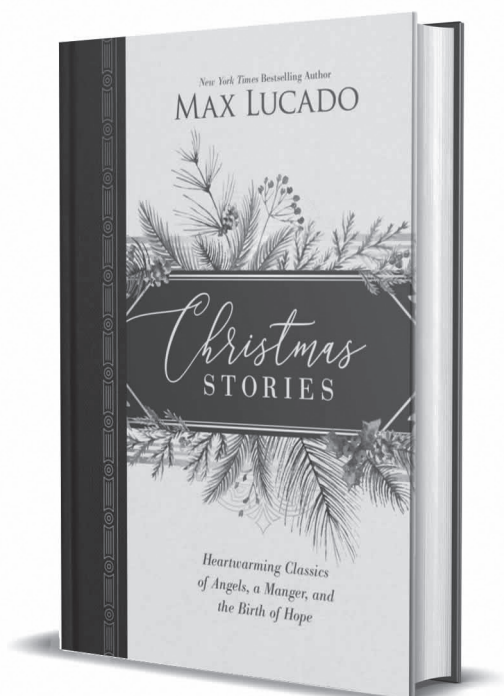
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