

Hope seems to be in short supply in our world today. Too many people are dealing with hopeless and despair. Maybe you're there now or been there in the past. It's hard to feel hopeful when you feel powerless. But God promises to give both hope and power to His people.

As we look around we can see a lot of power plays and power struggles. The upcoming mid-term election is about who is going to have the political power. You may have purchased a lottery ticket this past with the hope of the economic power winning would give you. Power plays happen every day between parents and kids, teachers and students, bosses and employees. You may be going through a power struggle right now. Protesters use demonstrations in an attempt to disrupt the power of others. When power struggles take place in relationships, everyone loses.

Jesus promises power to His Disciples, His followers. Just before leaving for heaven, Jesus said, **“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”** (Acts 1:8 NLT) The Holy Spirit is God's power source for our lives. The power of the Spirit is not taken by force or given on demand. It is given to God's people so that we can be living witnesses for Jesus. It is given so that we can live as God's people and point people to Christ.

But sometimes we need a little push to get the job done, to do the right thing, to tell others about Jesus. Conversations about faith or lack of faith are more infrequent than frequent. The Barna institute reports that less than one quarter of Americans discuss faith even once a month. 56% of Americans have had five or fewer faith conversations in the last year. There are some reasons for that in our rapidly changing nation. As Americans become more secular, Christians become more reluctant to talk about our faith. We don't want to be considered disrespectful or judgmental. Barna reports, **“This rise in secularism, coupled with growing skepticism toward the Bible and Christianity creates a cultural climate in which talk of spiritual or religious matters becomes less pertinent and less comfortable.”** (Spiritual Conversations in a Digital Age) When is the last time you had a conversation about faith? We need a push.

The PUSH that God gives us starts with Spirit Power. The Spirit was active and present at the time of creation. The Spirit gives new birth to believers and changes how we live. When the Spirit is working in our lives, the change should be obvious. **“The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”** (Galatians 5:22-23) These are not the characteristics of people living in a power mad world. But they should be the characteristics of God's people because the Spirit is living in us, changing us to become more like Jesus. The Spirit also determines the special gifts individual Christian get to be used for the good of all.

The second part of the Spirit's PUSH is Unity. Unity is not uniformity. We are different people given different gifts and abilities. We are not all the same. But we are all united in our faith. Ephesians 4:3 tells us, **"Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace."** We don't create the unity, God does. Our goal is to keep the unity and to live at peace with one another. Some people are easier to get along and work with than others. That's why we need the Spirit's help. Anytime Christians can work together as partners in God's family, the Spirit should be praised. Anytime the church experiences division or conflict, the Spirit of God needs to be consulted.

Not only does the Spirit unite the church, the Spirit also Supervises the church. The work of a supervisor is to keep things working. The Spirit brings comfort to God's people, guide Jesus followers to the truth and carries the prayers of God's people. The Spirit produces that desired atmosphere of truth, wisdom and freedom among God's people. The Spirit has the power to transform our lives. When we resist the Spirit's work, we persist in disobeying God and want to decide what is right for ourselves. When we refuse to forgive others we can find hatred and anger growing inside of us. We need the Spirit to hold us accountable, to call us to repentance, to help us live faithful lives. Just as a good counselor doesn't let us get by with anything we want to do, the Holy Spirit doesn't let us do whatever we want to do because we want to do.

The final PUSH of the Holy Spirit is to make us Holy. The Spirit makes us Holy in God's eyes. 1 Corinthians 6:11 tells us about the change the Spirit makes in us. **"But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."** That doesn't mean that we are living holy lives today. We should all know better than that. But we are declared holy because of Christ. The Spirit is working in us now to become more like Christ. This is a process. It doesn't happen overnight. It's not even completed in this life. But when the Spirit is working in us, our lives are changed.

There are times we need the Spirit's PUSH to talk about our faith, to stop and listen to someone who is hurting, to do the right thing. Have you ever found yourself unexpectedly in the right place at the right time to help another person? I have. I call these things "Divine Appointments." We make appointments to see our Doctor or Dentist. We set up lunch appointments and schedule service appointments for our cars. But we don't schedule Divine Appointments. God puts them on the calendar for us. He pushes us in the right direction so that we can do what He wants us to do. Ephesians 2:10 tells us, **"For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."** The Spirit helps us keep our eyes and ears open to see and keep those appointments.

The Spirit is the power behind our being witnesses for Jesus. So many times we think we have to just the right words to talk about our faith or wait for just the right time. But the right words or right time may never come, at least not in our minds. We usually get the opportunity to talk

about our faith with people we already know. We already have a relationship with them. So we can tell them how God has made a difference in our lives, how He helped us through a tough time, how he took away our guilt or given us a purpose in life. We can tell our faith stories with the Spirit's help and power. Our job is to be a witness, not to convince or coerce. Our witness is not a spiritual power play. We tell the story, the Spirit provides the power. So don't be afraid to talk about your faith when the opportunity presents itself. Remember the Spirit is with you. This may be the Divine Appointment God put on your calendar that day.