

How Holy Spirit Can Surprise You Every Day

I met the Holy Spirit at around the age of 11 and didn't even know it until nearly 30 years later.

I had grown up in the church. I made my decision for Christ during a spring revival at a Southern Baptist church before I reached the teen years. I went all the way through Sunday school to youth group, from elementary school to college. Later, I had that mid-20s swoon some believers go through when I didn't even bother with His knowing better (or did I know better?); I just barged forward in late-late-adolescent verve into life after college doing my thing my way.

God, in His infinite patience and lovingkindness, gave me lots of room on the leash to run off for a while, until He gave me a loving yank and pulled me back to Him in my early 30s. It was a hard but wonderful day, and through it all, I tried to stay pressed into the Spirit. Some times proved more effective than others. But what little I thought I could confidently say I knew, those things that I knew that I knew, were: the central message of the gospel, who God is and how I fit into His grand purpose that was far bigger than me.

But it was back at the age of 11 that, as I would only realize in hindsight, the Lord was making in me a heart after His. He gave me an almost unrecognizable capacity to see the good, humble and possibly even vulnerable heart in every person I encountered each day. From the kind grandmotherly figure at the grocery store to some hulking wall of muscle from the nearby middle school who would sooner grind me into a fine powder and sprinkle me over the schoolyard fence into the parking lot, I saw the hearts of others.

It was my own mom who saw this at a time when I was sure no

one noticed, not that I was sure what this was. I happened to have overheard her on a telephone call with her twin sister, our beloved aunt, saying something about how “...even if someone gave him a box of chocolate-covered ants, he’d still appreciate the thought.”

My mind was blown. Here I’d been, having these long talks at bedtime with God. I’d say my nightly prayers, but then suddenly have those chats regularly zoom off into all sorts of different directions. To this day, I’m still grateful that even at the age of 11 I had—God allowed me to have—just enough presence of mind to observe these patterns in how my prayers were changing, mainly in that I had begun to have such an endless unconditional love for pretty much everyone.

Somehow, I could see the frailty in each person each day, regardless how frequently my own flesh would clog up the works and shift my seeing from God’s eyes to my feeble human sight. But it was clear there was something else new and building, and it was as exhilarating as it was unfamiliar and uncomfortable. And I had been given a gift of this message of confirmation through my own dear mother, who saw my little kid’s heart before I did.

Years later, on a youth group retreat between Christmas and New Year, I had the blessing of feeling closer to God than ever before. I remember walking back to our room to get a pen and thinking to myself, *“Lord, here I am. I don’t have anything to ask for, but I haven’t spoken to You in at least three minutes, and I already miss You ... so, hello, and thank You for the amazing gifts in this retreat.”*

It was an astonishing new thing to have a prayer conversation with Jesus purely for the purpose of wanting to be near Him. On that retreat, I had one of the first of many “now I know that I know” moments, and in that moment, I experienced James 4:8, “Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.” How amazing to call on the Maker of the heavens and the earth,

discovering He loves me vastly beyond any capacity I would ever hope to have to comprehend. And to seek Him purely to be closer to Him at any moment.

God led me to a career where I was blessed beyond measure to use my God-given passions in a place and with an amazing team to meet the world's deepest needs while taking the gospel to our desperately hungry and thirsting world. I have been blessed to enjoy the infinitely wise counsel of wonderful co-laborers far more knowledgeable in the things of the Holy Spirit than I was when I joined them nearly 20 years ago.

God piqued my appetite for His gifts, and I began a process of learning the gifts of the Holy Spirit, discovering which ones He built me with and how many places I might seek to bless Him by using them, glorifying our Father in heaven and causing Him joy.

I prayed one morning several years ago for Jesus to fill me with His Holy Spirit, excited about possibly speaking in my prayer language. I'd read about others experiencing intimacy with God in this way, and I desired this too.

For the umpteenth time in my life attempting to walk with the Lord, He took my breath away—I felt Him tell me, “I’ve known you forever, before you were knit in your mom’s womb, you’ve always had My fire burning in the deepest corners of your heart.” And I discovered that I knew that I knew, upon seeking the Holy Spirit that day, I had already met him as a child and have always known Him. {eo}

Listen to more Fruit of the Vine podcasts [here](#).

Robert Caggiano Jr. *has been a member of the Charisma Media Book Group for more than 17 years.*

Read articles like this one and other Spirit-led content in our new platform, CHARISMA PLUS.