

Why Jesus' Cross Breaks Power of 'Total Depravity' Doctrine

"When you read the Bible, it's hard to believe in evolution. Instead, you're more likely to believe in devolution. We didn't start out like animals, but we're becoming animals."

In his book *Spirit-Filled Jesus: Live By His Power*, Mark Driscoll pulls no punches in writing on the total depravity recorded in the Old Testament. From "redneck Noah" who passed out drunk and naked in a tent, to Solomon who had 700 wives in addition to 300 concubines; Adam who caused the Fall of mankind, and Abraham who had a child with "the girlfriend his wife picked"—it's no wonder these are the stories Sunday school teachers skip over.

To commit sin is to rebel against God's laws. Martin Luther and John Calvin, while both influential theologians, were also trained as lawyers, and their writings rightly taught that sin is breaking God's law. However, Driscoll goes further to show how sin also breaks God's heart.

He points to the many instances in the Bible when humans grieved the Holy Spirit—the first occurrence being only a few chapters after sin entered the world.

"The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was continually only evil. The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him in His heart" (Gen. 6:5-6).

"Let that sink in," Driscoll says. "Your sinning causes God's suffering."

But by God's goodness alone, we are given a way to be forgiven. From His broken heart, God sent His Son to take on the sin and wash its stain on our hearts.

Though Driscoll believes that Christians still sin and need to keep seeking God for forgiveness, he does not subscribe to the Calvinist teaching of total depravity.

In his blog post “A Christian Is Not Totally Depraved,” Driscoll writes about how total depravity “means that sin has infected the totality of a person including all thoughts, feelings, emotions and desires. That is in fact true—until someone becomes a Christian.”

In *Spirit-Filled Jesus*, Driscoll breaks down how living by the power of the Holy Spirit transforms your character to be more like Jesus. You can maintain emotional health, overcome temptation and wisely navigate your relationships in the same God-glorifying way that Jesus did.

The Holy Spirit can restore our desires, thoughts and feelings. While “those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh,” a Christian who lives “according to the Spirit” has their mind on “the things of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5).

“When you are filled with the Spirit, God’s love begins to transform you into a loving person,” Driscoll says. “God the Holy Spirit alone can renew your mind to love God’s truth, learn God’s ways and live for God’s glory.”

For this to happen, we are called to surrender all of ourselves—our mind and emotions—to God. On a practical level, Driscoll encourages readers to “be sober and watchful” (1 Pet. 5:8a) as we constantly resist our sinful desires and prepare our minds and bodies to worship God.

We can seek spiritual growth when we learn the Scriptures (Luke 2:46), respect authority (Luke 2:51) and live in a relationship with the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:22). Just like Jesus.

Most importantly, we’re called to ask God for wisdom (James

1:5). Driscoll challenges readers by asking, "How is your relationship with the Holy Spirit, and how can the Holy Spirit help you have wisdom and health in your other relationships?"
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This article is based on Spirit-Filled Jesus: Live By His Power (Charisma House, 2018) by Mark Driscoll. Driscoll is a Jesus-following, mission-leading, church-serving, people-loving, Bible-preaching pastor and the author of many books, including Real Marriage and Who Do You Think You Are? With a skillful mix of bold presentation, accessible teaching, and unrelenting compassion for those who are hurting the most, Pastor Mark has taken Christianity into cultural corners rarely explored by evangelicals. He has been grilled by Whoopi Goldberg and Barbara Walters on The View, gone head to head with Piers Morgan on CNN, debated the existence of evil with Deepak Chopra on ABC's Nightline, bantered with the gang on Fox and Friends and explained biblical sexuality on Loveline with Dr. Drew.