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SERMON OUTLINE FOR PASTORS

HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT TEACHES

Three Ways the Spirit Brings the Word to Remembrance

> The Holy Spirit teaches by bringing what Jesus said, the whole of Scripture, back to our remembrance, so the more of the Bible we store up, the more He has to speak to us with.

MAIN TEXT
John 14:26

FIRST PREACHED
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SERIES
We're Rooted in the Bible, Week 3 of 6

BY
Pastor Jason Mayfield

AT A GLANCE

THE MESSAGE

1. The Bible is inspired, inerrant, infallible, immutable and authoritative, but it is not exhaustive; John 14:26 tells us what the Holy Spirit will teach and how he will teach it.
2. Because Jesus is the Word, connected to Genesis 1:1 by John 1 and to the close of Revelation, everything in scripture is what Jesus said, so the Spirit has the entire Bible to bring to remembrance.
3. The Holy Spirit brings scripture back to your memory while you read the Bible, through illumination and through specific instruction for your specific situation.
4. The Holy Spirit draws phrases and fragments of the Bible out of your memory and pushes them to the forefront of your mind.
5. The Holy Spirit activates association processing, dropping one verse into your mind and chaining information until you have insight that seems to come from nowhere.
6. There are no skipped levels: the Spirit can only draw on the scripture you have actually stored, so the more you engage the Bible the more specifically he can speak to you.



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READ THE ARTICLE

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PREACHING NOTES

Before You Preach

This is the third message in a six-week series on being rooted in the Bible, and the second of four levels of hearing from the Lord. Last week was the first level: the power of preaching. This week is the second level, and it is the primary one: the Holy Spirit teaching through Scripture He brings to mind.

The goal is to take the mystery out of hearing from God without taking the Spirit out of it. Tell people plainly what they are listening for. Many sincere believers have never been told, and others claim to hear from God with no Bible in them at all.

Expect one misunderstanding. This message says you do not have to set out to memorize Scripture, and someone will leave with only that. Be clear: the Spirit carries the weight of bringing it to remembrance, but He can only draw on the Bible you have actually read. The call is to read a lot.

Introduction

Hours before the crucifixion, Jesus took His disciples aside and told them exactly how the Holy Spirit would communicate with them. In the church today, people talk about hearing from God who do not meet the qualifier Jesus gave. We treat it lightly, when we have explicit instruction.

> **JOHN 14:26** ESV
>
> [26] But 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.

THE BIBLE IS NOT EXHAUSTIVE

In week one we talked about the value of the Bible. It is inspired, inerrant, infallible, immutable and authoritative. But there is one thing the Bible is not: the Bible is not exhaustive. It does not tell you everything about everything. You cannot turn in your Bible to find out how to change the oil in your car. You cannot flip back to the maps to find your local Walmart. There is no recipe for spaghetti in the Bible.

So we need the Holy Spirit to teach us, and John 14:26 tells us what He will teach: all things. Have the congregation say it: “All things.”

> **JOHN 16:12-13** ESV
>
> [12] “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. [13] 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.

Jesus said this in the same setting. The Spirit will teach you all things, but at a rate you can receive them. If He gave you everything at once, your mind could not hold it.

WHAT DID JESUS SAY?

John 14:26 also tells us how the Spirit will teach: by bringing to your remembrance what Jesus said. That raises a question. What exactly did Jesus say?

> **JOHN 1:1-3** ESV
>
> [1] In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [2] He was in the beginning with God. [3] All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

The Word is capitalized because it is a name. A few verses later John tells us who the Word is: "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). Jesus is the Word, and John ties Him to the creation of all things. Where is the creation of all things first told?

> **GENESIS 1:1** ESV
>
> [1] In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

John 1 connects Jesus to the first line of your Bible. And John also records Jesus naming Himself the beginning and the end:

> **REVELATION 22:12-13** ESV
>
> [12] "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. [13] I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

Then, at the very close of the Bible:

> **REVELATION 22:20-21** ESV
>
> [20] He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! [21] The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

Jesus is tied to the first line of Scripture and to the last. And "All Scripture is breathed out by God" (2 Timothy 3:16). So Jesus did not only speak the words He spoke to His disciples. He is the Word, the author of the whole Bible. He did not just say the letters in red. He said the letters in print.

The Holy Spirit communicates to His people by bringing Scripture out of our memory to the forefront of our mind. Most people do not know how to hear from the Holy Spirit because they do not know what they are listening for.

THE PRIMARY LEVEL, AND NO SKIPPING LEVELS

Some preachers talk as if they have a direct line to heaven and never tell you what to listen for. It is very possible the Holy Spirit has been speaking to you and you did not know what to listen for, or you did not give Him anything to speak with.

This is the second of four levels of hearing from the Lord, but it is also the primary way the Spirit speaks to His people. Even when you live at level four, most of the time you are operating at level two.

And there is no skipping levels. Be wary when someone says, "I heard from the Lord," and has not opened a Bible in years. Usually something strange follows. If you want to go up, you have to go up through this level.

1. The Spirit Brings Scripture Back to You While You Read the Bible

The Holy Spirit will teach you through the Word when you are in the Word.

A disclaimer: this is not only "the Bible says it, so you know everything you need." This is God giving you a specific word for a specific situation in your specific life, with your specific circumstances, your specific job, your specific spouse and your specific kids.

Illustration: the shortest pencil. The saying goes, "The shortest pencil is better than the longest memory." If you want to remember something, write it down. Think of the server who tries to impress you by not writing your order down, while you just want the burrito to be right. The Bible is God's memory written down: a giant reminder of everything He has done.

The Spirit teaches you in the Word in two ways.

Illumination. The doctrine of illumination says the Holy Spirit has to give you the ability to understand Scripture for you to understand it. You can understand some of the Bible with an education, but you will not understand much of the Bible without illumination.

Instruction. Not just "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not," but specific direction for you.

Illustration: the oasis. Years ago Pastor Jason was the worship leader at a church in Adrian, Michigan. The church grew quickly, from about 400 to over a thousand in less than a year, and he assumed he would be there for decades. One day, reading his Bible in his office (he usually reads at home, because this works for everyone, not just preachers), he came to this verse:

> **EXODUS 15:27** ESV
>
> 27 Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they encamped there by the water.

Immediately the Spirit spoke: "You are not in your promised land. You are in an oasis." (You have to know your Bible a little to get that word: Elim was a stop on the way, not the destination.) Later, things went

badly at that church. The pastor was involved in serious misconduct, and they were hurt in the process. But they made it, because they had a word from God early on: their destiny was not tied to that church. They were there for a season.

2. The Spirit Draws Phrases and Fragments of the Bible out of Your Memory

A disclaimer, with full transparency: Pastor Jason has never been a big promoter of setting out to memorize Scripture word for word. He does not memorize much of anything. (He once improvised Shakespeare in front of a class instead of memorizing it.)

But read John 14:26 again: "he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26). Have the congregation read it together. When it comes to remembering Scripture, the greater share of the responsibility rests on the Holy Spirit. He will bring it to your remembrance.

Often, when the Spirit teaches you, He draws little phrases and fragments out of the archives of your memory from time you have spent in the Word, and suddenly they come to the forefront of your mind. Now you know what you are listening for: "That's from the Bible. That came to my mind out of nowhere. That's the Holy Spirit teaching me something." And suddenly you have divine insight on some area of your life.

This happens in Acts 1. Jesus has ascended. Judas, who betrayed Him, is dead. The disciples are gathered in the upper room.

> **ACTS 1:13-20 ESV**
>
> 13 And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and
> John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of
> Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. 14 All these with one accord were
> devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his
> brothers. 15 In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all
> about 120) and said, 16 "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke
> beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested
> Jesus. 17 For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry." 18 (Now this man
> acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle
> and all his bowels gushed out. 19 And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the
> field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) 20 "For it is written in the
> Book of Psalms, "'May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it'; and "'Let
> another take his office.'

Peter quotes two Psalms (Psalm 69:25; Psalm 109:8). Neither is an obviously messianic psalm. There were Jews watching for the Messiah, and prophecies pointing to Him, but if we did not read these two in

hindsight, they would not line up with what Israel expected of a Messiah at all.

Picture what likely happened. Peter is in the upper room praying, and given what we know of his personality, he is probably angry about what Judas did. Every time Judas comes to mind, he keeps hearing, "Let another take his office." Finally he stops the room: "I keep hearing these two little Psalms. I think we need to replace Judas and go back to a full twelve." And they did (Acts 1:26). A little bit of Scripture kept coming to his mind, and it gave him the insight to restore the twelfth apostle. That is the Holy Spirit teaching.

Illustration: the roundabout. Last year Pastor Jason's business had a setback. Driving to the grocery store, in the middle of a roundabout, in about three seconds, he heard the Spirit say, "Cast your net on the other side." (Jesus' words are "Cast the net on the right side of the boat" (John 21:6).) He knew at once: I know where the fish are. Everything was going to be all right. It was a verse. It was a word. That quick.

Some will think, "I expected that to be deeper." That is the problem. Too much preaching makes hearing from God complicated and mysterious. Paul warned of people who "make much of you, but for no good purpose" (Galatians 4:17): they make much of you so you will make much of them.

The church tends to swing back and forth. One generation over-spiritualizes, teaching the unclear things with six theological opinions as if they were the cornerstone of the faith. The next pulls the spirituality out of the pulpit and teaches only practical advice anyone could figure out. But when you see how the Bible can help you spiritually in very practical ways, God will change your life through His Word. Preaching does not need to create a Sunday frenzy. It needs to be helpful, and it needs to be true, even when the truth costs something.

3. The Spirit Activates Association Processing

Your brain is fascinating. Information moves through it constantly, and fast. (Pastor Jason cited nerve signals traveling up to 268 miles per hour.) **Association processing** is when your brain connects a chain of information almost instantly. Sometimes you get a rush of information all at once and can make a decision in less than a second.

Illustration: pinball. The Holy Spirit pulls back the plunger and drops a verse into your mind. He pulls something up from the archives, and it starts hitting everything else in your head. The next thing you know, you have insight that seemed to come out of nowhere. But it was triggered by the Spirit bringing to your remembrance what Jesus said.

We see this in Acts 10. Do not read the whole chapter; summarize it.

> **ACTS 10:9-16 ESV**
>
> [9] The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. [10] And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance [11] and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. [12] In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. [13] And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." [14] But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." [15] And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common." [16] This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

Peter is praying on a roof. He falls into a trance and sees a sheet let down from heaven, full of animals forbidden under Jewish dietary law. "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." Peter refuses. It happens three times, and he is left perplexed. Then a knock at the door: messengers from a Gentile named Cornelius. This is the moment the Gentiles are brought into the kingdom.

Luke wrote Acts, and he tells it from the outside. But the Gospel of Mark, by long church tradition, carries Peter's own account through his younger companion Mark. In Mark 7, after Jesus teaches that food does not defile a person, the Gospel adds a note: "(Thus he declared all foods clean.)" (Mark 7:19). Peter seems to have connected that vision to something Jesus had said. A word from Jesus, a vision, a knock at the door: lightning-fast insight, triggered by the Holy Spirit.

4. Give the Spirit Something to Draw On

The point is not to sit down and memorize the Bible. But the only way the Holy Spirit can communicate with you this way is if you have some Bible in your memory for Him to draw on.

Many people want to talk about hearing from God, and it is obvious they have no Bible in them. Some of you are desperate to hear from the Lord and do not know why you are not. It is because you have not given Him anything to communicate with. In a sense, Scripture is the universal translator between humanity and the Holy Spirit. It is the way heaven is funneled down to our ability to understand. Paul said, "I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations" (Romans 6:19). The Bible meets us in our limitations.

So read your Bible a lot. As you do, the verses that need to brand themselves on you will.

How much Scripture is stored up? Pastor Jason shared a statistic he found, without naming a source:

- The average American unbeliever: 1 to 3 verses picked up somewhere ("I know the plans I have for you," "don't judge," maybe John 3:16).
- A nominal Christian, not active in church or faith: 10 to 20 verses.
- A regular church attender: 50 to 100 verses. Coming to church regularly puts you in a good position to hear from the Spirit, which is one reason to preach with a lot of Bible.

- Someone engaged with the Bible (as defined in week one: reading at least four days a week, through the whole Bible in 18 months, then starting again): 100 to 300 verses.
- Someone who teaches the Bible and reads it daily: 1,000 to 3,000 verses. (That is a good reason to sign up to lead a small group.)

Could the Holy Spirit speak into your situation with just 200 verses stored in you? Absolutely.

The more you engage with the Bible, the more you store up. The more you store up, the more the Holy Spirit can draw out. And the more He has to draw on, the more specifically He can speak to any situation in your life.

This does not happen overnight. Nobody leaves tomorrow with 3,000 verses. It is built day by day.

Conclusion

Next week: how to develop a time with the Lord every day. The church has made this look harder than it is. It is not hard to read. It is not hard to pray. It is not hard to hear from the Lord. Take the mystical fantasy out of it, and your life will change.

And here is the good news from Acts 1. When the Holy Spirit spoke to Peter through those two Psalms, it was before the Day of Pentecost, before Peter was baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4). This is not reserved for the highest levels of spirituality. It is available to every believer who has given their life to Jesus Christ.

Close in praise: if you are thankful for the Word this morning, give the Lord a praise.

OPTIONAL: PETER REMEMBERS

Not preached on November 2, 2025. Acts states this pattern outright, if you want a second text.

When Peter later explained what happened at Cornelius's house, he said, "And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 11:16). The Spirit fell, and a word of Jesus came to Peter's remembrance, exactly as John 14:26 promised.



ABOUT

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