Planting & Pastoring in the Power of the Spirit

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Hi, I'm Cyd, and I am here with you today to talk a little bit about pastoring and the power of the Spirit. It's a pretty huge topic, and I am no expert, but I'm just here to talk a little bit about sort of what I have learned, and what I have come to be convicted about, about pastoring and the power of the Spirit. So to begin with, I just want to say, you know, our model for pastoring and the power of the Spirit is Jesus. Jesus is the one who was filled by the Holy Spirit, did all kinds of work in the Spirit.

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And so to start with, it's really important that we turn to Jesus as our model. So we see at Jesus' baptism that God speaks these beautiful words over His Son, God the Father. You know, the heavens split open, the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus in the form of a dove, and then the words of the Father speaking identity into His Son. You are my son, and with you I am pleased, and you bring me joy is another way to think of that.

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And so the first thing that we learn from Jesus as our model is that we belong in the presence of God. We're part of the family of God. God calls us by name, claims fathering. He claims us as part of his family. And so we are created for God's presence to be with God, to belong to the family, that that's where our identity begins. That's where our identity comes from. And then the second thing that we learn from the model of Jesus is that the spirit is upon Jesus for a purpose.

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So it's not just about the presence of God with Jesus, that Jesus is the presence of God, but it's also that Jesus has a purpose because the spirit is upon him, the spirit has anointed him. And so we see in the book of Luke when Jesus sits down and after reading the scroll and saying that this is fulfilled in me, that the spirit of the Lord is upon him. to, right, to have a purpose, to bring good news, to release the captives, to bring sight to the blind, to bring freedom to the oppressed, to proclaim the Lord's favor.

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So not only is the Holy Spirit about presence of God with us, but it's also about purpose being about God's business. So I'm not going to unpack that anymore because my husband Jeff and I wrote a whole book about it. So if you want more about that or how that shows up in Scripture or where we see that happening

through the whole narrative of Scripture, I would encourage you to pick up a copy of our book. But for today's purpose, we're going to try to stay a little bit more practical. So instead of going through the whole biblical narrative and seeing how we see the Spirit at work all through Scripture, we're just going to talk about how do we as pastors, as ministry leaders, try to move in the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

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Okay. So the thing I want to say first and foremost that I have learned and that I am totally. is that in order to lead in the power of the Spirit, it all begins in the presence of God, in the presence of the Spirit. And as we look at Jesus as our model, his whole ministry is just saturated with presence. He's spending time with the Father. He has the Spirit with him, and Jesus offers presence to every person that he meets. He sees them.

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He hears them. He understands them. He's with them in a very real way. And so the presence of the Holy Spirit is the beginning of our pastoring in the power of the Spirit. Jesus did what he saw the Father doing, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, he was constantly not only present to the Father and recognizing the Father's presence with him, but he was present to the people that he was around. So, again, I'm not going to unpack that too much, but I am going to talk about how that has shown up for me and what I have learned in my life.

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Life as a pastor. And that is the first and foremost thing that I always need to keep in front of me and always understand is that God is always with me. And not only is God always with me, but God is always with you. God is always with the person that I'm meeting with. God is always with the team of people that have come together to do something. God is with us as we worship. God is present in our communities. God is with us, and nobody gets to have the corner market on God's presence.

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So the presence of God is available to every single human being who is open to it and who is hoping to find God's presence. And so that gives me incredible courage because it reminds me that I'm never alone. And ministry can feel very lonely, and pastoring can feel very lonely, but we are never alone because God is always with us. And Jesus meets us in everything. Every single place that we are, and Jesus meets every person in our communities. And so that relieves some of that burden of needing to be with people all the time when people are in need, feeling like we need to be with them all the time.

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It helps us to be able to say and to trust, even when I can't be with that person, God is with that person. The Holy Spirit is with that person. God is present even when I am not. And so that fact that God is with me and God is with everyone in my community gives me that a little bit of rest and release from the pressure to

always be available, to always be there, to always be present. And the fact that Jesus is meeting me and is present in every single conversation and every single activity that I am a part of reminds me that I begin and end everything that I do with a simple,

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simple conversation with God. So for me, that sounds like this. It sounds like, God, I recognize that you have been with me all the time. Until this moment, that you are going to be with me after this thing is over or this conversation is passed, that you've been with every person that's going to be involved in this, and you will be with all of those people after this is over. And so I just ask, let me see what you see. Let me hear what you hear. Let me know what you know so that I can love like you love.

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And so just with that simple reminder to myself, God is with me, and God can give me his eyes to see. God can give me his ears to hear, and God can give me his mind and his wisdom to understand, and God can give me his love to do the loving. And what this does for me and my day by day is it just builds trust and surrender in me. And the surrender, you know, all through scripture we see the spirit is coming upon people who are surrendering. People who are trusting.

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And so that surrender looks like a surrender. Acknowledging where I have limitations, acknowledging that I am finite, I begin and I end and I have weaknesses and I have needs and I am not everything, but recognizing my own limitations and then acknowledging that God is with me and the Holy Spirit's presence with me gets me access to all of the resources of the entire kingdom of God. And so in all of my deficits and in all of my weakness, there is so much that I have access to.

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So much. And so I am never, never incapable of doing the work that is in front of me if I am relying on the presence of God with me and accessing those resources and doing whatever I can to surrender to what God is doing in the moment. And so the second part. The second part of things that I've learned through pastoring and the power of the Spirit is that. It is always about God through me. And the first thing I want to clear up about that is for a long time I had this sense that being a pastor meant I need to just completely get out of the way and let it be God and God alone, such that when people look at me, they only see God.

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And there is a beautiful posture in that, but I have learned that I need to be me because God created me to image him in a way that is unique and that no one else images him in the same way. And so when we all bring fully ourselves and our uniqueness and our creativity and who we are, then the fullness of God is

represented in the church. And it's not just. It's not just carbon copies or invisible people that are now just God through us.

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So I don't want to say that it's like it's about us because it's not about us, but it's about us with God, God through us, but we have to show up. We don't just disappear. And so I think for all the self-denial that we try to do of like, oh, it's not about me, I can't bring these parts of my personality or I can't bring this part of who I am, I have come to see that God works through me in a way that is about who I am, but it's God through me, me imaging God in a unique way.

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So the reason I say that is because in order to be able to do that, we have to be fully free to be who we truly are in the image of God. And this is a lot more to go into, and I'm not going to go into all of it, but all of us have wounds, all of us have things that have happened to us, all of us have created personas, all of us have put on masks, all of us have these sort of compulsions, these things that we just sort of like feel like we can't even control. That we do.

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And a lot of those spring out of. The patterning of our childhoods and just the things that we have come to believe and understand about ourselves and the world and about God. And so if we're going to lead in the power of the Spirit and have God be working through me, then we have got to know what is truly the image of God in me and what is all the baggage and the nonsense that I have collected along the way that pollutes and clouds and gets in the way of that.

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And so I cannot stress enough how important it is for us as pastors to do our work. And what I mean by that is to deal with our stuff. And so just to talk a little bit more about that, it's like we see this model of Jesus in the wilderness and Thomas Keating has a great little book called, what is it? It's on my shelf. Sorry, I'll put it, I'll get it to you. But Thomas Keating has. It's this great little book where he talks about.

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the programs for happiness. And he talks about how we all have these basic needs. We have the need to belong and be accepted. We have the need to be significant and powerful or to make an impact. And we all have the need to be safe and secure. And it's these needs that we all have that make us develop all these broken strategies and these programs for happiness to try to get those needs met. And when we have found ways or strategies to cope with those needs that do not.

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involve the provision of God, that's where we end up with these strategies and these masks and these things that cloud and prevent us from being truly who we are in God's image. And so if we look back to Jesus as our model again, we look at right after his baptism, he starts his 40 days in the wilderness before he does

anything. And out in the wilderness, I believe that Jesus was spending that 40 days just releasing. Many of the strategies or the attachments that he had developed over his 30 years of life that prevented or that could possibly keep him from being fully free to be the man, the God's son, the anointed one to do what he'd been called to do.

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And so if we look at that, he spent 40 days letting go of all of his identities and all of his belongings and all of his acceptances. So he had been the son of Joseph and Mary. He was a brother. He was a neighbor. He was a friend. And he was part of a community. And all of that could have come to a place of he could have been somewhat attached to those identities. And during his 40 days in the wilderness, he's shedding all of that. And he's living out of the identity of I am the beloved son of the Father filled by the Holy Spirit.

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And then he's also spending. All of this time letting go of any. security and safety that he had found in having a home and having a place to sleep and having predictable routines and having regular food on the table and having this sort of sense of normalcy and the safety and the calm that that can bring. And in 40 Days in the Wilderness, he's not eating, he's not drinking, he doesn't have a place to sleep. And so he's shutting all of that attachment and securely attaching himself to the provision of God the Father, caring for him, tending for him,

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the spirit with him, sustaining him. And then he's also addressing that need for significance and power because during that time in the wilderness, nobody sees him. He's not doing anything and he's not helping anybody. He's not making any impact on anyone's life or doing anything to change the world. For that 40 Days, he's just being, just being the son of the Father. Just being with the Spirit and just being provided for.

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And so he's shedding any of that sense of, like, having this usefulness, this productivity of being a craftsman, of making things and contributing to his community. And for 40 days, he's got none of that. And so by the time Satan comes to him at the end of those 40 days and tempts him with these three particular temptations that address these three needs of belonging and acceptance, safety and security, and power and significance, Jesus is able to just be like, I don't need any of that. I have found everything I need in fellowship with my Father, with the Spirit, and with the purpose that I have been given, and I don't need anything that you have to offer me.

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Now, I recognize that we as pastors are never going to find that place of being completely free and having no temptation. But I think we can do our work, and we can really pay attention to what is this about? Why is this so important to me? How am I looking for significance and power outside of what God has given me

to do? How am I looking for belonging and acceptance in this community? How do I need to be affirmed? What do I need people to say about me?

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Or how do I need people to treat me? Looking to get that need met somewhere besides in that total belonging of God saying to us, you are my child. I am pleased with you before you've done anything. To pay attention to how those needs show up in twisted and broken ways, because God through us means that God is communicating with us. God is partnering with us. God is collaborating with us. And pastoring in the power of the Spirit means we've got to listen.

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and learn how to pay attention to how God is communicating with us. Oh, God. And I have learned that God often communicates with me in things that feel very much like my own thoughts. So my own thoughts, my own pictures, my own imagination. And it's really crucial to figure out what is the me that is pleading for all of these needs and trying to get my needs met and is caught up in all of these broken strategies. And what is the me that is truly the image of God that is in communion and fellowship and is free to hear from God?

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And so when we ask God questions like, who do you want me to love today? And what do you want me to do today? And what do you want to show me about this situation? And as we wait and listen, and this is something I think we all need to learn to do. Because God really is communicating. And if we will give him the space and the time, he will speak to us and he will give us his wisdom and his insight. And so as we listen and pay attention to our thoughts, pay attention to our bodies, pay attention to our emotions, the spirit will move in us and will give us insight and will give us ways to listen.

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And I know that this is weird for some of us, and it was weird for me when I first started learning to do it. But even just asking, God, what do you want me to know about this person? If you call someone to mind and just say, what do you want me to know about this person? And then just leave space and allow yourself to notice, oh, when I think about this person, I feel an ache in my side.

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Maybe that's God's way of letting you know that this person is in pain somehow, that somehow there's something in their body that is hurting. And when you can go to say that person, you know, when I was thinking about you today, I had this weird ache. And I don't know if that has anything to do with you. I'm wondering, do you have any aches in your side? And I can't tell you how many times I have had some feeling like that and gone to someone and said, hey, this might be weird for you, but this is what I noticed when I was thinking about you and when I was praying for you.

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And I don't know how many times people have said, oh, my goodness, I didn't

even tell anybody how much that's been hurting. It's been there for a week. And then to be able to say, well, I believe God wants to heal that in you, because why else would he let me know that that's going on for you? So let's pray. Let's pray about that. And it's also happened when I just say, OK, God, what, you know, like the people gathered in this room, what do you have for these people? And to get just random thoughts, like we were just with our youth group the other day, and I had just this random thought of like this picture of a well.

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I was just imagining. I was imagining a deep well, it's dark at the bottom, but this sense that there's something really good at the bottom, but feeling terrified to jump into it. And then noticing that there is a bungee cord around my ankle. And so I just risked it and said, all right, teenagers, as I was thinking about you and as I was praying for you, here is a picture that came to my mind. It makes no sense to me, but does that resonate for anybody? And one of the guys in the group said, yeah, that's exactly how I am feeling.

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I feel like there's this really good thing that God is asking me to take a leap and jump into, and I'm so scared. And I said, well, let's pray about that. And we prayed about it, and he was able to feel that confidence of the bungee cord around his ankle that he was missing. And so for God to express his love for this boy, I can't tell you how radical it is for people to just offer. This might be weird, and if it fits, great, and if it doesn't, no big deal. I've got nothing invested in this, but as I was praying for you, I really felt like God showed, you know, God, this came to my mind.

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And then if it's... If it's true or if it fits for the other person, you get to say, wow, God loves you so much that he gave this to me so that he could let you know how much he loves you and so that we could pray into that together. And that is a beautiful way of God through us that I feel like so many of us are missing out on. Why? Because we have those needs to be accepted and to belong, and we don't want to be weird, and we don't want to be wrong.

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And we have this sense of wanting to do great things when really it's just about tuning in with God's heart of love for people and being able to speak. God loves you so much that he would give me a sense of this so that we could talk about it and we could pray about it. And there have been times when God has shown something. There have been times when God has shown something to me where someone is like, I have never talked about that with anybody. How could you know that? I didn't know. All I did was ask God, how do you want to love this person?

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There is so much power in that, and that is the Holy Spirit speaking to us, communicating with us, giving us access to all of the wisdom of God, all of the

knowledge of God, all of the love of God. But we need to take the time to listen and to ask. There needs to be an expectancy about us. Of if I will just tend, if I will just watch, if I will just listen, God will do something.

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But most of the time, we're not even watching or we're not even listening because we're so focused on the next thing that we need to be doing. So just as an example of this, I'm going to step off the screen for a minute. When I come back, you need to tell me what changed. So maybe you noticed, maybe you didn't. Because maybe you weren't looking before, truly seeing. So I'm going to do it again. And this time I'm going to ask you, before I step off the screen, really look.

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Just notice. Just really see me. And when I come back, see if you can notice what has changed. Maybe you noticed this time, my necklace. It's outside my sweater now, before it was inside my sweater. And before I asked you to look the first time, it was outside again.

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So it's a small thing. But it's a small thing that you wouldn't notice if you weren't looking and if you weren't really seeing. So part of God through us and part of the work of the Holy Spirit in through us is paying attention. Really watching. Really seeing. And holding that expectancy that God is doing something, I just need to keep attending, keep noticing. And so what this looks like for me is, again, like I said, that prayer of, God, let me see what you see.

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I think of blind Bartimaeus when Jesus said to him, what do you want me to do for you? And he said, Lord, let me see. And then he saw in part, and he was honest, I'm only seeing a little bit. And Jesus healed him the rest of the way, and he said, now I can see, right? So we can begin to see glimpses of what God is doing, and we can be honest. I'm not seeing very well. Please give me better sight. Please give me better attentiveness to what you're doing. I just want to notice what you're doing.

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Because here's the freedom that comes with it. When we know clearly that God is with us, and God is operating, through us, and God is always present. And always at work, and we are joining with him and collaborating with him, it takes off all the responsibility in the negative kind of way, right? It takes off, we have so much responsibility and so much agency because we do have access to all the resources of heaven. And it's our responsibility to accept that, to be who we already are.

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But it takes away the responsibility of needing to make something happen. NotePin, it's all up to me because it's not. It's not up to you to build this church. It's not up to you to love all the people in it as thoroughly and completely. It's not

up to you to meet everybody's needs. It's God through you revealing what's in front of you today, what's the next thing.

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And I love how the Jewish tradition, day before. It begins in the evening. At the sundown, it's that trust and surrender that my day begins with rest and with me letting go of everything and sleeping while God works. And when I wake up in the morning, I wake up to join him in what he's already doing, but knowing that it's his work and I'm joining in with that.

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And so I just want to encourage you. It may not be comfortable for you and it may be new for you, but to just start being open to the reality that if you ask God to show you what he sees, what he's hearing as people are talking, what he's knowing about your community and about this place that you are inhabiting, and what he's doing, what he wants you to do. And. If you take the time and the space to really allow yourself to just notice what thoughts are coming to mind, what you're noticing in your body, what you're noticing in your emotions, and to just take the risk of starting to share that stuff, the more often you do it, I believe the more often you're going to get confirmation that God really is communicating with you by the Holy Spirit.

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The Holy Spirit is speaking and the Holy Spirit is moving. And when God shows you this person has this incredible toothache and you're able to say to this person, hey, does your tooth hurt? Like, I know that's weird, but I feel like God told me your tooth hurts. And if they say, no, my tooth doesn't hurt, he's like, okay, no big deal. Must have been just me. Or maybe it's someone else. But if they say, yes, my tooth does hurt, then my friends, that is the story.

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That's the Holy Spirit's invitation to really trust. That Jesus really did equip and empower with every single one of us with all of the gifts of the Spirit to heal the sick, to bring freedom to the captives, to make the lame to walk. And I know that there's so many, there's so many things going on in the world and there's so many bad examples of the Spirit at work that people, you know, want to be like, oh, the Lord said, thus saith the Lord, or we call down with power or we like, there's a lot of manipulation.

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I'll be honest, there's a lot of manipulation. And people have used the language of the power of the Spirit in ways that are hurtful and harmful. But that's not what we see in Jesus. It's all about love. It's the presence of God with us. The Holy Spirit is all about love. And everywhere that the Spirit is, there is joy and there is peace. Never coercion, never force, never shame.

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The Spirit comes as an expression of God's love and tenderness and of that anointing and that desire to make the world right, to restore, to renew. And so our

posture as pastors, trying to lead in the power of the Spirit, is one of expectancy. Not assuming we know God was doing, but expectancy, watching, waiting, tending.

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And then trying to respond with immediacy when we see it. The book of Mark is filled with immediately, immediately, immediately. The Spirit of the Lord gives us the freedom to be immediate, to respond immediately, but not impulsively. And that's what we do. where we have to do our work. The impulsivity is us trying to get our own needs met in a way that is twisted. The immediacy is the response in the freedom of the spirit. And when we can live.

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in that freedom of the spirit, we can respond rather than react. We can be immediate rather than impulsive. And we can live with expectancy rather than having expectations of what needs to happen. So hopefully something that I have said today resonates with you or makes sense to you or feels like an encouragement to you. But God is with you. And God is working through you. And you.

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are a branch grafted into the vine. And the vine has this beautiful extensive root system. And from that root system, we can grow. And we can grow. We draw all of our strengths, all of our needs are met. Everything that we need is provided for us, and we have access to all of it because we are a branch grafted into the vine. And the only responsibility that we have is to abide.

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And abide, abiding in the vine means to accept, to accept what is, and to live accordingly. So, my friends, you are filled with the Holy Spirit. You are made to be in the presence of God. You are a beloved son or daughter, and you have been given a purpose. You have been given something to do that only you can do,

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and you can only do it in the power of the Spirit. And so I just invite you. Thank you. Abide. Accept what's already true and live accordingly and watch the fruit just explode. And may God's kingdom come wherever you are on earth as it is in heaven. Go in peace.