

Leading with the Holy Spirit's Help

Excerpt from the book:
Pastoral Grit: Key Practices for Resiliency in Ministry



Loren Houlberg, MA, D.Min.

Leading with the Holy Spirit's Help

Excerpt from the book:

Pastoral Grit: Key Practices for Resiliency in Ministry

Loren Houlberg MA, D.Min

Leading with the Holy Spirit's Help

Published by Foursquare Missions Press ©2021

An excerpt from the book:

Pastoral Grit: Key Practices for Resiliency in Ministry

by Loren Houlberg MA, D.Min

The complete book of ***Pastoral Grit*** is available via Amazon or purchase directly from Dr. Loren at loren@efcsalina.com

Order copies of this booklet at foursquaremissionspress.org

Introduction

Every year I receive dozens of requests from authors wanting to publish their books. I've also served as a pastor for many years prior to joining Foursquare Missions Press.

I mentioned these two personal experiences because of Loren's book, *Pastoral Grit: Key Practices for Resiliency in Ministry*. After reading the first chapter I knew immediately we needed to get this book into the hands of hundreds, if not thousands, of leaders around the globe – especially those beginning their pastoral journey. I only wish I could have read it when I first started out.

Loren graciously accepted my invitation to print and give away the first chapter of this anointed book. Plus, he's added a video that goes over the basics of its content.

If you are forty years into ministry or four months, there are nuggets to be mined from his book. Loren combines his pastoral

heart and scholarly touch to challenge you to a deeper walk and more inspired calling.

My prayer is that this booklet will whet your appetite for more and you will buy the book either for yourself or for the leaders you care about.

You won't be disappointed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'BH', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Bob Hunt

Director – Foursquare Missions Press

Leading with the Holy Spirit's Help

It's taken some time, but I finally trust the voice of Google Maps. Some of my wife's and my worst disagreements have been over directions. Erie was the first to start accessing Google Maps; it took me a little longer to see my need for the help. I just wasn't convinced a computer really knew the best way to get us where we wanted to go. At first, I didn't trust that confident voice could lead me to my destination. I do now, and I'm happy to report that my travel anxiety has been greatly reduced, especially when trying to find my way around in large cities. The Holy Spirit is like the voice of Google Maps. If we as pastors would see our need and then ask, hear, trust, and follow the direction of the Holy Spirit, pastoral ministry would be far less stressful and much more fruitful. Aimee Semple McPherson, founder of the Foursquare Church of which I am a pastor, said doing ministry without the help of the Holy Spirit

was like “making brick without straw.”¹ We all know getting direction from the Holy Spirit isn’t quite as easy as asking Google Maps, but this chapter encourages pastors to have a living theology of the Holy Spirit that accesses all of His help. I chose this topic for the first chapter because, in my opinion, seeking the Holy Spirit’s leading and guidance is the most important practice for a resilient, fruitful, and fulfilling lifetime of ministry. With His help, the work of the pastorate truly can be a joy.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you (Jn 16:7).

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you (Jn 16:13-14).

...And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied (Acts 9:31).

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God (Rom 8:14).

¹ Aimee Semple McPherson, *The Holy Spirit* (1931; repr., Los Angeles: Echo Park Evangelistic Association, 2015), 57.

The Great Helper

I have always seen in Genesis 24 a beautiful picture of the role of the Holy Spirit in the lifetime of a believer. Let me explain how I interpret this text and the way it relates to pastors today. In this passage I see Abraham as a picture of God the Father. He sends his trusted servant, a picture of the Holy Spirit, to get a bride for his son Isaac. Isaac is a picture of the Lord Jesus, and his bride Rebekah represents individual believers in the church, who have been chosen as the bride of Christ. The trusted servant took full responsibility for finding Rebekah, overcoming obstacles, and getting her back safely to present her to Isaac as his bride. Rebekah had only to be willing and obedient to the servant's leading.

The trusted servant is not named here, just as the Holy Spirit is the only Person of the Trinity without a personal name. The Holy Spirit always points beyond Himself to the Father and the Son, and it is His mission to bring the bride to the bridegroom. Amos Yong states, "The Spirit who is always hidden and points to the Son also leads followers of Jesus to empty themselves in the service of the Son."² Lesslie Newbigin as-

² Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 112.

tutely observes “the Holy Spirit does not lead past, or beyond or away from Jesus.”³ Dr. Guy Duffield, one of my professors at LIFE Bible College, gave his students a booklet he wrote entitled “Christocentric Pentecost.” In the booklet, Duffield stresses that it is the Holy Spirit’s ministry to glorify Christ. He says of the baptism of the Holy Spirit that “we must realize that this mighty experience is primarily a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Jesus calls the Holy Spirit the *Paraclete* (Jn 14:16) and Gerhard Kittel’s Theological Dictionary confirms the best translation of this word is “helper.”⁴ Another Greek word, *epichoregia*, gives a full indication of the overall help the Holy Spirit can provide to us as pastors. Paul tells the church to pray for “the supply [*epichoregia*] of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:19). We get the English word “choreographer” from this Greek word. A choreographer designs and directs the movements of a production. The Holy Spirit is to be the choreographer of our lives. For pastors, this includes the ministry of our churches.

³ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Light Has Come, Exposition of the Fourth Gospel* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1982), 216-217.

⁴ Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. V (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 814.

Right after my wife and I got married, less than a year after I committed my life to Christ, we felt called to go to Bible college in Los Angeles and pursue a life of pastoral ministry. We were ready to take off for California early one morning before sunrise. Our 1964 Barracuda was packed to the brim with all we owned. On our way out of town, Erie and I stopped at the First Foursquare Church at 1111 Elmhurst (in those days the church was always unlocked). We knelt down at the altar to commit this life journey to the Lord. Kneeling there I saw a clear mental picture of Erie and myself as little children about five years old and before us was a bright path that led into the future. That picture gave me assurance the Lord would be with us on our journey. Forty-seven years have passed since then and the Holy Spirit has continued to be our trusted guide every step of the way. The Lord has been faithful to us, as I am sure He has been in your life and ministry. Pastors, we are not alone; the Holy Spirit is the Helper who can design and direct our lives and pastoral ministry.

We see in Acts 19 and Luke 24 two contrasting views of the role the Holy Spirit can assume in a pastor's life. Paul asked the disciples he found in Ephesus if they received the Holy Spirit when they professed their belief in Jesus Christ. They replied, "We have not so much heard whether there is a Holy Spirit" (Acts 19:2). In Luke, Jesus exhorted the disciples, "Be-

hold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high” (Lk 24:49). The Greek word for endued is *enduo*, and conveys the sense of sinking into a comfortable garment, like putting on your favorite sweatshirt. I bought a long-sleeved t-shirt at a running store in Colorado when we were trapped there during a blizzard. I love this shirt; it’s just the right weight—not too heavy and not too light. When I’m just hanging out at home, I often choose to “sink into” this shirt because it’s so comfortable. The Lord Jesus wants us to get comfortable depending on the help of the precious Holy Spirit. Applying these texts to pastoral ministry, a pastor can either conduct ministry as if there is no Holy Spirit (Acts 19:2) by depending on their own natural talents or abilities, or they can be clothed with the Holy Spirit and depend on the Spirit in all they are and do. I realize at times pastors will do both. The meaning I apply to “endued” is to get really comfortable being clothed with or wearing the Holy Spirit in all facets of life. Stanley Burgess quotes Msgr. Maurice Landrieux as calling the Holy Spirit the “Forgotten Paraclete.”⁵ To be resilient, pastors must not forget the Paraclete. If we forget the Spirit, ministry becomes difficult.

⁵ Stanley M. Burgess, *The Spirit and the Church: Antiquity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984), 1.

Two Essentials

Before a pastor can access the help of the Holy Spirit, he or she must first see a great need for help. In Jesus's teaching on fruitfulness He made a profound statement that sums up our need for help: "Without Me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5). The words of Aslan to Prince Caspian in *The Chronicles of Narnia* are applicable to pastoral ministry: "If you felt yourself sufficient for the task it would prove you were not."⁶ The degree to which a pastor receives the Spirit's help is directly related to the pastor's understanding of their need for help. Aimee Semple McPherson, founder of the Foursquare Church, often acknowledged her great need for the help of the Holy Spirit. Church historian Vinson Synan pays McPherson a high compliment when he claims, "She holds a prominent rank among all religious leaders in the twentieth century regardless of their sex and may well be the most important ordained woman minister in the history of Christianity."⁷ Here's what McPherson says about the Holy Spirit:

⁶ *The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian*, directed by Andrew Adamson (Walt Disney Studio Motion Picture, 2003).

⁷ Vinson Synan, ed., *The Twentieth-Century Pentecostal Explosion: The Exciting Growth of Pentecostal Churches and Charismatic Renewal Movements* (Altamonte, FL: Creation House, 1987), 100.

Any success which has followed my ministry is attributed to the motivating power of the Holy Spirit in my own life. The tremendous power and ever-increasing momentum which enabled the Foursquare Gospel Church in seven short years following its inception, to encircle the earth, is naught but the impelling force of the blessed Holy Spirit baptism. This great international organization is bona fide proof in itself of the indomitable prestige, triumphant power, and invincible strength of the work of the Holy Spirit.⁸

You might think after forty years of pastoring the same church that I would have this pastoral ministry vocation figured out. I don't. In fact, I find myself more in need of the Holy Spirit's help today than ever before. A close friend teases me about a statement I made a number of years ago when I said, "I need Jesus more today than I did when I got saved." I believe this as strongly today as the day I said it. As I was reading through Brother Lawrence's writings, I came across this statement that validated my feeling about my need for Jesus: "A soul is more dependent on grace, the higher the perfection to which it aspires; and the grace of GOD is more needful for each moment, as without it the soul can do nothing. Thus to rely seems

⁸ McPherson, *The Holy Spirit*, vii.

hard to nature, but grace makes it become easy, and brings it joy.”⁹ I find myself asking the Holy Spirit for help in everything including how to love my wife, how to be a grandpa, how to conduct the daily routines of life.

As a Pentecostal pastor, I believe when I pray in tongues my understanding is unfruitful but my spirit is praying and the Holy Spirit is helping me pray according to the will of God (Rom 8:26-27; 1 Cor 14:14). I find myself praying in the Spirit now more than ever before and believe I am receiving the help of the Holy Spirit. Two common phrases I use constantly in my daily walk with Jesus are, “Forgive me, Lord” (when I entertain a wayward or selfish thought) and, “Help me, Lord” (as I constantly face the challenges and opportunities of each day). Before I start my day, before I go into a pastoral counseling session, before a church council business meeting, before I go home, before I go on vacation—all these situations and more are times to invite the help of the Holy Spirit. What a joy it is to have this Helper in our lives!

Once you’ve recognized your need for the Holy Spirit’s help, the second essential is to have “ears to hear” what He’s saying to you (Rv 3:22). And to understand that it’s a lifelong

⁹ Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God and The Spiritual Maxims* (n.p.: Benton Press, 2013), 41.

endeavor to consistently discern, hear, and obey the Holy Spirit's leading. Being led by the Spirit (Rom 8:14) was key to the great fruitfulness of the early church. I always marvel at Paul's sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. We see this sensitivity in phrases like these: "they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit" (Acts 16:6), "the Spirit did not permit them" (16:7), and in the vision of a man saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us" (16:9). Paul's great sensitivity to the Holy Spirit resulted in the spread of the gospel to Philippi, which was in Europe, and eventually to us in North America. I long for this kind of relationship with the Holy Spirit. A. W. Tozer laments, "The tragedy is that our eternal welfare depends on our hearing and we have trained our ears not to hear."¹⁰ Jesus reminds us in John 10 that his sheep hear and know his voice but we must train our ears to hear Him. "In the Garden" is a cherished hymn that describes the great joy of hearing his voice: "He walks with me, and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own."¹¹ Augustine says of the Lord, "See, your voice is my joy, your voice is better than a wealth of pleasures."¹²

¹⁰ A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1948), 43, 77.

¹¹ C. Austin Miles, "In the Garden," accessed February 11, 2020, https://www.hymnary.org/text/i_come_to_the_garden_alone.

¹² Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008), 222.

I know I've followed the leading of the Spirit when I call someone in our church and they respond, "Pastor, how did you know to call me now?" When I'm led by the Spirit and show up at the right time to do and say the right thing, it brings me great joy. John 3:8 says, "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." Holy Spirit-inspired ideas always produce fruitful ministry.

Here are five statements about how the Holy Spirit helps us hear the Lord's voice better. Thomas Kelly (1893-1941) describes the great blessing of hearing the Lord's voice: "We cease trying to make ourselves the dictators and God the listener, and become the joyful listeners to him, the Master who does all things well."¹³

We hear the Lord better with a quiet heart than with a busy heart. "The sound of noise from the city! A voice from the temple! The voice of the Lord" (Is 66:6). Many voices from the world and the church's many activities compete for our attention. Can we quiet our hearts long enough to hear the Lord? I've always been interested in why Caleb had "a different spirit"

¹³ Julia I. Roller, ed., *25 Books Every Christian Should Read: A Guide to the Essential Spiritual Classics* (New York: Harper One, 2011), 306.

(Nm 14:24). The Hebrew word carries the idea he waited longer. He didn't give in to his initial reactions but quieted his heart long enough to hear what the Lord said to him.

We hear the Lord better with a burning heart than with a dull heart. In Luke 24:32, two disciples on the road to Emmaus had burning hearts as the Lord opened the Scriptures to them. As a pastor, I relate this to sermon preparation. I pray and study but wait until my heart burns within me with the message for the congregation. I also compare this burning heart to Colossians 3:15 and letting “the peace of God rule in your hearts.” The peace of God brought by the Holy Spirit should be the umpire to help us make the right decisions. We should never violate it in our hearts.

We hear the Lord better with a humble heart than with a prideful heart. Calculating the distance the children of Israel were to follow behind the ark, I come up with a distance of about half a mile. The people would have to concentrate and be alert to see the ark at that distance. Hearing the voice of God and following the leading of the Holy Spirit takes concentration and effort. Sometimes we say “the Lord told me” as an excuse to do what we want. We can get the Lord's voice and our own voice mixed up. “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (1 Pt 5:5). It is an awesome thing to say

the Lord told you to say or do something. It takes humility, seeking, and confirmation to hear the Lord. We cultivate hearing his voice with humility and a lifetime of seeking his will.

We hear the Lord better with a word-saturated heart than with a world-saturated heart. The voices of the world (1 Jn 2:16) can speak louder to us than the Lord if we are not hiding the word of God in our hearts through daily Bible reading and meditation. The word of God is God speaking (2 Tm 3:16) to his followers. The New Testament calls the word of God the sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17). We as pastors need to be like David's mighty man Eleazar, the son of Dodo (2 Sm 23:9-10), who fought so hard his hand stuck to his sword. Pastors need to always have the word of God in their hand as they go about their pastoral tasks. We will hear the Lord better this way. For me, the Lord speaks most often through a Scripture that applies to a situation (Rom 10:17). The prophet Isaiah expresses the importance of the word of God: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Is 8:20).

We hear the Lord better with a courageous heart than with a timid heart. It takes courage to obey the voice of the Lord. It takes risk and courage to step out in faith. Smith Wigglesworth said the key to his spiritual strength was always

obeying the Lord's leading. One day at a train stop the Lord told him to tell the young man next to him to stick out his tongue. The Lord told Wigglesworth to spit on the man's tongue. He did it. Would you have done this? Years later at one of Wigglesworth's services a young man came up and asked if Wigglesworth recognized him. Wigglesworth said no. The young man said, "I was the one who you told at the train stop to stick out my tongue and you spit on it. I was tongue-tied and stuttered and I had told the Lord, 'I can't go into the ministry unless you heal me.' When you spit on my tongue I was healed, and I am now in the ministry." Wigglesworth's courage and obedience released God's healing power for this young man. Lord, help us to hear You first, and then give us courage to obey.

Psalm 32:8 says, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye." My wife and I were eating dinner with some old friends after I had spoken at a church in Colorado. A young family came in and caught my eye. We were about ready to leave and I wanted to go over and tell them what a beautiful family they had. Then I had the impression, which I discerned was the Lord's voice, saying, "He is a pastor; buy their lunch." I went to the table and told them they had a beautiful family. Then I asked him if he was a pastor. His face lit up and he said, "Not yet, but I'm preparing to be

one.” I told them I was going to buy their lunch, and prayed that the Lord would bless them in their future. This is an example of being guided by the Lord’s eye, and I invite experiences like this often. I certainly don’t hear the Lord perfectly or as often as I want, but it’s an exciting prospect to get up every day and pray for my daily bread to be led by the Spirit that day. Lord, help us all to do this. Lord, help us to say like Joshua, “What does my Lord say to His servant?” (Jo 5:14).

Orthopraxy of the Spirit

Let me finish this chapter talking like a theologian. We as pastors need a sound orthodoxy of the Holy Spirit, but equally crucial to pastoral ministry is a living orthopraxy of the Holy Spirit. Orthodoxy is correct belief; orthopraxy is correct conduct.

The Greek word *praxis* is used six times in the New Testament and is translated by the English words “works” or “deeds.” The English word “practice” comes from this word. Practice is a repeated exercise, activity, or skill to acquire or maintain a proficiency at a task. Praxis is defined as doing or a mode of acting. Ray S. Anderson more clearly defines praxis when he says, “Whereas practice implies the simple nonreflective performance of a task in a dispassionate, value-free manner, praxis

denotes a form of action that is value-directed and theory laden.”¹⁴ A practice that is repeated becomes a habit. My goal for pastors and for myself is that we develop a habit of accessing the continual help of the Holy Spirit in our personal and ministerial lives. In the voice of a theologian, this book is about a pastoral orthopraxy of the Holy Spirit.

A pastor might teach a pneumatology about being born of the Spirit, being baptized in the Spirit, being filled with the Spirit, and being led by the Spirit, but does he or she have a living theology that brings righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17) to everyday life? Jakob Egeris Thorsen insists we need a pneumatology that brings “the concrete experienceability of God’s existence and the empowerment by Him in the everyday lives of believers.”¹⁵ Pastors need a functional theology that brings the power and the presence of the Spirit into their ministries. In Ephesians 5:18, the apostle tells the church to “be filled with the Spirit.” The tense and voice of this verb is present imperfect passive and denotes continually, continuously being filled with the Spirit. Frank Macchia de-

¹⁴ Ray S. Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 47.

¹⁵ Jakob Egeris Thorsen, *Charismatic Practice and Catholic Parish: The Incipient Pentecostalism of the Church in Guatemala and Latin America* (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill Publishing, 2015), 49.

scribes this kind of life as “a lived experience of the Spirit that must be renewed time and time again.”¹⁶

Ancient theologians verify this need for orthopraxy. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) was known as the “theologian of experience,” and he called the Holy Spirit “the very Kiss of the Father.”¹⁷ What pastor would not want the kiss of the Father on his or her life and pastoral ministry? These words describe the personal help of the Holy Spirit. The Cappadocian Fathers of the fourth century expressed the Trinity in the term *perichoresis* or the “divine dance.”¹⁸ They used this term to describe the movement and fellowship within the Trinity. The Holy Trinity invites pastors to join the divine dance in our pastoral ministry. John the apostle expressed it like this: “Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 Jn 1:3). It is the Holy Spirit who brings us into the fellowship of the Father and Son. We are not alone but can live out our pastoral ministries with the fellowship and help of the Trinity.

¹⁶ Frank Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 30.

¹⁷ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 52.

¹⁸ Molly T. Marshall, *Joining the Dance: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2003), 7.

Questions to Ponder

1. Describe your relationship with the Holy Spirit.
2. Which is more important to you, a right orthodoxy of the Holy Spirit—a right belief, or a right orthopraxy of the Holy Spirit—a right conduct, or are they equally important?
3. Describe how the Holy Spirit helped you on a recent typical day in your pastoral ministry.
4. Describe a specific situation where you heard the voice of the Lord.
5. How are you growing in being endued with the power of the Holy Spirit (Lk 24:49)?
6. What is your reaction to the Lord's words in John 15:5, "Without me you can do nothing"?

Going Deeper

Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology, by Frank Machia

The Holy Spirit, by Aimee Semple McPherson

Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom, by Steven Jack Land

Living the Spirit Formed Life: Growing in the 10 Principles of Spirit-Filled Discipleship, by Jack Hayford

About Foursquare Missions Press

Foursquare Missions Press (FMP) is a resource ministry dedicated to providing free gospel materials to the mission field.

Since 1981, FMP has printed 225,000,000 gospel books, booklets, and tracts sent to 116 nations in 70 different languages.

Their Children's Gospel Box ministry has resourced and trained some 16,000 children's ministry leaders, reaching over 1,000,000 children in 55 nations. To learn more go to cgbox.org.

Visit us at foursquaremissionspress.org.

If there was only one chapter of one book you could give to a new pastor – this would be it!

Yet, this booklet and the book it comes from will inspire both the seasoned pastor and the emerging leader.

It lays the critical foundation upon which all Spirit-filled leadership must build. Dr. Houlberg distills 40 years of faithful and fruitful pastoring within these pages.

Watch Dr. Loren's short teaching on pastoral ministry and the Holy Spirit at foursquaremissionspress.org/PastoralGrit or use the QR Code.



The complete book of ***Pastoral Grit*** is available via Amazon or purchase directly from Dr. Loren at loren@efcsalina.com.

Order copies of this booklet at foursquaremissionspress.org.



Loren and Erie Houlberg were pastors of Emmanuel Foursquare Church from 1980-2020. Loren has a Masters degree from Friends University in Wichita, Kansas and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. The Houlbergs have four children (their spouses) and seven grandchildren. Loren is currently a regional pastor for The Foursquare Church and a college professor.

Published by



FMP
Foursquare Missions Press