

A Journey with the Holy Spirit by Laurie Ivor Leitch

In this our Lenten season we have identified the importance of reflection for the cleansing and renewing of our souls as an everlasting gift to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This gives us another chance to become closer than we ever were to God. Considering the nature of the world we live in and its decline in all facets of life; an inward reflection cannot be any more vital than it is to us today.

However, what we must be reminded of is that reflection is just a means to an end. The end can take many different definitions according to one's perspective. For this morning's journey, I intend to demonstrate the perspective of reflection as a means to help us to listen to that "still small voice" ever present around us; as it seeks to deliver proof-positive guides to keep us on the right path. Yes, I speak of none other than the Gift from God: the Holy Spirit. I will bring out a variety of points with the use of stories of my journey through life.

Mind you I am just a Systems Analyst slash Tutor; so I am aware that there is not a lot that I can possibly tell you that you do not already know is happening around us everyday. We are all unique and offer up experiences and testimonies that are so varied and yet so much the same because they all have the same theme. The same backbone. One common ground; which is: strengthening our own personal walk with Christ so that others may see; may understand and come to know Christ for themselves. So as you lend me your ears keep one of those ears opened for the Holy Spirit within my tales. That is, the many ways in which the Holy Spirit can try to reach us throughout our daily lives.

Story 1: The coconut tree.

As a child I was mostly quiet and reserved around my elders; but very adventurous among my peers and my siblings. This nature has earned me the title of being "sneaky" to some, but I saw my techniques as a strong form of preservation. When the last finger of banana goes missing none of my guardians would ever think of pointing their finger at Laurie. One day, when I thought that my guardians were away, I decided to set about one of my adventures before they returned. On this particular day my main goal was to climb to the top of the coconut tree in the front of our home. I had seen this act being done by children my age within a different community (albeit with the help of a cloth that they would wrap around their feet to ensure there was extra grip and contact between their feet and the trunk of the tree). In my mind I felt: "anything they can do, I can do better". This particular goal had been plaguing me for months prior to this day and I had not been given the chance to act on it until now. Without the help of any devices and with my eyes ever pointed towards the sky (did I mention I have a slight fear of heights?) I hugged that trunk and made my way slowly up the coconut tree that evening. I made it all the way to the top and was so elated that I had not noticed that quite a lot was happening below me. My mother was on the veranda of our home calmly trying to get my attention and, when she did, she was asking me why I was up there (I had come to find out later on in life that my younger brother, Nigel, had told my mother what I was doing by the time I was in the middle of my ascent). At first I could not believe that I was being spoken to so gently after being caught doing something so wrong. I expected a good scolding even whilst I was up there swaying in the breeze. But since she was speaking so calmly and now asking me nicely to come down for dinner; I saw no reason to defy my mother and so I slowly began to descend from my conquered tower. Mind you this did chafe quite a bit as I was wearing short pants and there is no way to come down from a coconut tree without hugging on to the rough trunk and sliding down. Upon arriving on the ground I went upstairs to meet my mother and sit down for my dinner only to realize the dinner was none existent and replaced with some good old fashioned corrective activities. Can anyone tell me where the "still small voice" occurred in this story?

Yes it was strong within my mother speaking to me calmly to come out of a dangerous, life-threatening situation. My mother would tell me later on that she was so afraid of my dying that day by falling out of the tree with nothing to break my fall but the harsh earth below. She had choices to make. She could have started screaming at me to come down. She could have started crying because of what may have happened. She could have walked back in the house and chose not to witness what was about to happen. She could have started her corrective activities whilst I was still up there (Lord knows I was expecting that choice). But she chose to talk her son down out of the death trap. Now many of you may just think that it was just good parenting. However I personally believe it was the Holy Spirit helping the family through a tough situation. Besides, isn't being a good parent easier to grasp when one is walking with the Holy Spirit each and every moment?

An even smaller but equally as powerful voice that day came from my younger brother who had chosen to tell mom what was taking place outside in the yard. As a child Nigel could not lie as it related to keeping the secrets of his siblings' activities. I thank God for his character even to this day for things could have ended differently.

Story 2: A nudge.

I was told in my teenage years that I was a very special child. Of course most children are told this. It is nothing new and it is true because we are all special in the eyes of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. However, I had the privilege of hearing what made me so special. One reason was because I was able to see snakes long before the snakes saw me and this was a good thing in Guyana which is well known for venomous snakes. I do not remember a lot of my childhood but the good thing about “experiences” is that some of them have the chance of repeating themselves and therefore I was provided the chance to spot some more snakes and scorpions in my teenage and adult years to understand and appreciate what may have been happening to me as a child why I saw them first.

In actuality, it always felt like a “nudge” out of nowhere. It felt as though I was just looking around like everyone else does; but for some strange reason something would tell me to take a closer look at a specific spot I had just glimpsed which seemed normal moments ago. Hollywood would have said it was spidey-senses. I personally felt it was the Holy Spirit alerting me. As a young Guyanese I was always told to report the snakes whenever I saw them and I followed that suggestion to the Tee whenever I got that nudge and was rewarded with the sight of the little slithery things just before they were about to hide themselves somewhere.

Lately I have witnessed that same “nudge” happening in my wife, Evelyn, as we are now faced with the new terror of the Old Harbour scorpions of doom. However, not only am I comforted by the way she always sees them before they can run and hide; I am also confident that the nudger who used to help me out back in Guyana; is the same one moving in her to help her out in her new role. By the way, I have now taken on the role of the scorpion-police as I must be able to get rid of them whenever the spotter sounds the alarm.

Story 3: Being present.

During my early days at the University of Technology, one of my friends called me telling me that she was feeling a little bit uncomfortable. Upon further inquiry I found out that she was living with a roommate who had a rocky relationship and it was putting a strain on her. She was seeking an ear to listen and someone to calm her as she was tense at the time. However, I found myself going well beyond providing comfort; realizing the volatility of the situation I advised her to take her roommate to the police station and to let the law get involved before the issue escalated further. After hanging up the phone, I realized that this was one of those moments when action was needed more than just a comforting voice of reason and so I took it upon myself to drive to the home and escort both roommates to the police station myself. They were both able to make reports and statements and the

policemen were even able to act as intermediaries in the relationship. It was only long after the situation had resolved itself (in the form of an amicable parting of ways) that I had found out that not only was the roommate a victim of verbal abuse in her past but that her ex was physically abusive to her whilst they were together.

To me this shows the determination of the Holy Spirit to see things through to the end. Not to leave the job partially completed. Not to leave me acting as a listener. The story could easily have ended with me just hanging up the phone and going on with my life. Only God would have known how that incident may have ended after. However, it is my belief that the Holy Spirit wanted me to act and to see things through to the end to ensure as best as I can that nothing else negative would take place.

Story 4: Listening.

Ever since my younger days in Guyana I have had a love for many different kinds of music. I mostly found myself listening to rhythm and blues as well as soft rock. It was in the age of spiritual enlightenment; however, that I found meaning in the words of many Gospel songs. As children we were taught many Gospel songs to sing; “Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so...” I was proud of the fact that I could even remember the words of the songs much less be able to sing them upon request. However, the deeper meanings were lost on me back then. Even in my teenage years I found myself singing a lot of church songs with the best of them even though the meaning was lost on me. The Holy Spirit is the one who slowed it down for me; replayed each line until I began to truly understand the passion behind these songs. Songs have a lot to say if you truly listen to them. This goes for the bad songs as well, but that is not our focus today.

Therefore, during my early years of teaching at the University of Technology; and without the advantage of being trained how to teach others, I quickly learned how to rely on the Holy Spirit to lead me in the act of listening beyond the words of my students. With the simple act of truly listening to what each one has to say (even when they do not utter a single word from their mouths) I was able to very clearly tailor my dissemination of knowledge to each student in a way that was acceptable to them. They did not even have to outwardly show their appreciation of what was taking place because I was even listening to their gratitude long before the words came out. This made my job very easy. Teaching cryptic subjects like programming and computer logic is not always simple nor rewarding; but I was able to break down complexity and reap the rewards of my students passing with flying colours for 10+ years and so I know that the the Holy Spirit is present in everything and all we need to do is to tap in to this Gift.

Story 5: The missing car windows.

There was a time in 2016 when my mother was looking for a home in Jamaica and we had found one that looked promising. One day after work, myself, my mother and my sister decided to journey to the potential home to see what it looked like on the inside. We went to the home; went through the rooms and assessed everything in under 20 minutes and were now set to lock up the premises and leave. I was heading towards the car when I witnessed it being broken in to via the side door windows to the road and in a matter of seconds both my mother and my sister's laptop bags were taken. The thief's car sped off to destinations unknown and the amount of items lost within those two bags are still being recovered even now. As I speak to you I have still not yet fully recovered and the reason is this: I had chosen to ignore that “still small voice” on that day.

Just before getting in to the car my mother had asked me: “do you want us to put the bags in the trunk?” You see most of us in the Leitch family carry laptops in computer bags as a staple in our chosen career paths and we normally put them in the trunk for journeys such as these; but on that day my response was: “No. It is okay. We will just be looking at the home for a short time.”

You see that “still small voice” comes out in so many different forms. We cannot live a totally busy life and be able to hear it or grasp it. We have to be in tuned like using the dials on our radios.

Here are a few Bible references to the nature and beauty of the Holy Spirit: -

1. **The Holy Spirit Loves:** taken from the *Book of Romans, Chapter 15 and Verse 30* it reads: "Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." Truly in all of the narrated stories the Holy Spirit's love shines forth brightly. A love for all humankind.
2. **The Knowledge of the Holy Spirit:** taken from first *Corinthians, Chapter 2 and Verse 11* it reads: "For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God." Here we will note that the Spirit knows our hearts and our thoughts. We are therefore assured that the Holy Spirit will find ways to reach us that is in line with our unique personalities.
3. **The Holy Spirit can make Overseers:** taken from the *Book of Acts, Chapter 20 and Verse 28* it reads: "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." As potential overseers we have the right to keep our hearts and minds open to the will of the Holy Spirit. As potential sheep it is better for us to pay attention to our surroundings and those we interact with because they may be our shepherds.

There are many other characteristics of the Holy Spirit that can be applied to the stories I have provided but in the interest of time I will leave that as your homework.

As a child I always personified the voices I heard as an animated conscience (like Jiminey Cricket in the Disney Pinocchio movie) always having something witty to say at just the right time. However, whilst the Holy Spirit is always on time and persistent; what he has to say may not ever be witty, and if I ever saw a talking cricket I do not think I would be listening to it today even if it was dancing and singing. I would be running in the opposite direction.

In today's world the Holy Spirit is in tuned to who you truly are. He knows us more than we know ourselves. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is forever finding ways to get the Word to us in a way we can hear, listen, understand and act. Talking through others; interfacing with our dreams; creeping in to our waking thoughts as we pray and offer praise. Everything seems to have its purpose and, as a Christian, we would want to be able to be a part of that purpose. To not let it pass us by.

The beauty of the Lord our God's grace and mercy is that even when we have missed an important journey or a life-changing path; He sends us another, and then another, and even then another; just like a patient teacher who is adamant that all of their students must achieve success. However, with death ever certain for humankind, we must not take our patient teacher's infinite love for granted as there will come a day when the paths, the journeys, the opportunities will cease to exist before us. If by that time we have said “no!” or ignorantly missed all of the opportunities given to us then we would have officially missed the main teaching of the Holy Spirit; which is to serve our Almighty and Ever-living God at all times. To do His will. To be a part of the Family of God.

My prayer for us is that we quiet our minds and still our hearts so that we hear that “still small voice”; whether it comes from a stranger, a friend, family or our conscience; that we hear, listen, interpret and act so that our true journey here on this earth can begin anew. Amen.