

WALKING INTO
THE LIGHT

WHEN THE
HOLY SPIRIT TAKES OVER

UNDERSTANDING SPIRITUAL WARFARE
AND THE MINISTRY OF GOD'S PRESENCE

TAMPA LIFE CHURCH

BIBLE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT TAKES OVER

Most of us have attended church services that follow a familiar pattern. We gather for worship, receive announcements, listen to the preaching of God's Word, respond in prayer, and then return home. There is wisdom in order because "God is not the author of confusion" (1 Corinthians 14:33). Yet Scripture also teaches that there are moments when God Himself interrupts our plans. Throughout both the Old and New Testaments, whenever the presence of God manifested in a unique way, people often found themselves responding to Him instead of following their own agenda.

This past service was one of those moments. Rather than moving immediately into a sermon, the Holy Spirit began drawing people into deeper worship, heartfelt prayer, spiritual warfare, healing, encouragement, and ministry to one another. Pastor Tisdale recognized what God was doing and chose not to compete with that moment. Instead of forcing the schedule forward, he led the church to remain sensitive to the voice of the Spirit. Early in the service he acknowledged that "we are in a miraculous moment" and expressed his desire not to move away from what God was already accomplishing among His people.

For someone unfamiliar with Pentecostal worship, this may seem unusual. Why didn't the pastor simply continue preaching? Why were people praying for one another throughout the sanctuary? Why did worship continue for so long? Was this merely emotional expression, or was something spiritual taking place?

These are important questions because our faith is never built upon emotion alone. Everything we believe and practice must be rooted in Scripture. When we understand how God has worked throughout biblical history, we discover that there are moments when preaching becomes only one expression of God's ministry. At other times, the Holy Spirit ministers through worship, conviction, prayer, repentance, healing, prophetic encouragement, or the unity of believers ministering to one another. None of these compete with God's Word; rather, they demonstrate the living reality of the same Spirit who inspired the Word.

This lesson is not simply about one church service. It is about learning to recognize the difference between maintaining a schedule and following the leadership of the Holy Spirit. As believers, our highest priority is never to protect our program but to welcome God's presence. The greatest success of any gathering is not that everything happened exactly as planned, but that Jesus was glorified, lives were transformed, and His kingdom advanced. Whenever heaven interrupts our schedule, our response should always be faith, humility, and obedience.

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✦ REFLECT & WRITE

Think back to a time God interrupted your own plans. How did you respond in the moment, and what do you see looking back now?

PART 01

GOD HAS ALWAYS INTERRUPTED HUMAN AGENDAS

01

WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT TAKES OVER

One of the greatest lessons we can learn as followers of Christ is that God is not limited by our schedules. We often plan our lives carefully, organize our ministries, prepare our sermons, and structure our worship services, yet throughout Scripture we repeatedly find that God's greatest works began when people were willing to surrender their plans and follow His direction instead. While God values order, He never intends for our order to become a substitute for His presence. There is a significant difference between having a planned service and having a Spirit-led service. The healthiest churches strive for both. They prepare diligently while remaining sensitive enough to recognize when the Holy Spirit desires to accomplish something beyond what was originally planned.

This principle can be seen from the very beginning of Scripture. Moses certainly did not wake up one ordinary morning expecting to become Israel's deliverer. He was simply tending his father-in-law's sheep when God interrupted his routine through a burning bush.

> *And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush… And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush…*
> **EXODUS 3:2-4 (KJV)**

Notice something remarkable. God did not speak until Moses stopped what he was doing and turned aside. The interruption became the invitation. Had Moses ignored the burning bush because he was focused on completing his daily responsibilities, he would have missed one of the greatest encounters recorded in Scripture. Sometimes our greatest spiritual breakthroughs begin when we are willing to pause long enough to recognize that God is doing something unexpected.

The same pattern appears when Solomon dedicated the Temple. Every detail had been carefully prepared. The priests had fulfilled their responsibilities, the musicians were organized, and the sacrifices had been offered according to God's instructions. Everything was proceeding exactly as planned until God interrupted the ceremony with His own presence.

> *…then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God.*
> **2 CHRONICLES 5:13-14 (KJV)**

This passage deserves careful attention. The priests did not stop ministering because they lacked preparation. They stopped because God's presence became the primary ministry taking place in that moment. Their service was not cancelled; it was fulfilled. The purpose of every act of worship had always been to bring people into the presence of God. Once His glory filled the Temple, continuing as though nothing had happened would have ignored the very purpose of the gathering.

The prophet Isaiah experienced something similar. He entered the Temple during a season of uncertainty following the death of King Uzziah. Perhaps he expected an ordinary time of worship, but instead heaven

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opened before him.

> *I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.*
> **ISAIAH 6:1**

Everything changed in a single moment. Isaiah stopped thinking about the political condition of Judah and became overwhelmed by the holiness of God. His attention shifted from earthly concerns to eternal realities. Before God commissioned him to preach, God first transformed the preacher. This reminds us that God's presence often prepares the messenger before it delivers the message.

The New Testament continues this same pattern. Jesus frequently interrupted ordinary routines to accomplish extraordinary miracles. Blind Bartimaeus interrupted a crowd with persistent faith. The woman with the issue of blood interrupted Jesus' journey to Jairus' house. Zacchaeus climbed a tree expecting only to observe Jesus from a distance, but Jesus interrupted his expectations by inviting Himself into Zacchaeus' home. Again and again, we discover that heaven is not confined to human schedules.

Perhaps the clearest example is found in the Book of Acts. The disciples gathered in one place because Jesus had instructed them to wait for the promise of the Father. They undoubtedly had prayers they intended to pray and conversations they expected to have. Yet when the Holy Spirit was poured out, everything changed immediately.

> *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place… And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost…*
> **ACTS 2:1-4 (KJV)**

Imagine if someone had stood up and said, "We don't have time for this. Let's continue with today's agenda." It would have been unthinkable because the agenda had become the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The greatest event of the New Testament Church began because believers welcomed God's activity instead of trying to control it.

This helps us understand what occurred during our recent service. Pastor Tisdale came prepared with a message, yet as worship continued and the Holy Spirit began moving throughout the congregation, he recognized that God was already ministering to people's hearts. Rather than forcing the service back into its original outline, he chose to shepherd what the Spirit was doing. He even expressed that he did not want to move away from what had become "a miraculous moment." This was not a lack of preparation; it was a demonstration of spiritual discernment. A pastor's responsibility is not merely to deliver prepared notes but to faithfully lead God's people according to the direction of the Chief Shepherd.

Unfortunately, many Christians have become so accustomed to predictable routines that anything unexpected feels uncomfortable. We often equate control with maturity, but Scripture teaches something different. Spiritual maturity is demonstrated not by our ability to maintain complete control, but by our

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willingness to surrender control to the Lord. The Holy Spirit will never contradict God's Word, but He is also not restricted by our outlines. Sometimes He teaches through preaching. Other times He teaches through conviction, healing, worship, repentance, or the prayers of fellow believers. In every case, His objective remains the same: to glorify Jesus Christ and transform His people.

As believers, we should prepare our hearts before every service with a simple prayer: "Lord, I have expectations, but I surrender them to Your will. If You choose to work in a way I did not anticipate, give me the humility to recognize Your voice and the faith to follow wherever You lead." Churches that cultivate this posture remain both biblically grounded and spiritually alive. They honor God's Word without limiting the ways God chooses to apply His Word through the power of the Holy Spirit.

✦ REFLECT & WRITE

Where in your life right now might God be asking you to "turn aside" and pay attention, instead of rushing ahead with your own agenda?

PART 02

THE ENEMY WANTS YOUR VOICE BEFORE HE WANTS YOUR LIFE

02

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One of the most profound truths shared during this service was that Satan's primary objective is not always our destruction. Often, his strategy is far more subtle. Pastor Tisdale made a statement that deserves careful reflection:

Hell does not want to kill everything. Hell does not want to kill everything. Some things it wants to keep, guard, and occupy. It wants to sit on your voice, blind your future, lock down your worship, and call it his property.

This statement immediately challenges the way many Christians think about spiritual warfare. We often imagine that if Satan cannot destroy us, then he has failed. Yet Scripture reveals that an ineffective Christian can sometimes accomplish the enemy's purpose almost as well as a defeated one. A believer who has stopped praying, stopped worshiping, stopped believing, and stopped speaking God's promises is still attending church, but no longer advancing the Kingdom of God.

To illustrate this truth, Pastor Tisdale returned to the same passage that had been the focus of the previous weeks.

> *Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.*
> **MATTHEW 12:22 (KJV)**

This miracle is often remembered simply as another deliverance performed by Jesus. However, when we slow down and examine it carefully, we discover that the man's condition represents much more than physical suffering. He was possessed, blind, and unable to speak. In one person we see three dimensions of bondage: spiritual captivity, the loss of vision, and the loss of voice.

Notice what Jesus restored.

He restored his sight.

He restored his speech.

Only then do we fully understand that Jesus was restoring the man's ability to participate again in the purposes of God.

This is exactly how the enemy often works today. Before he attempts to destroy our lives, he first attempts to silence our faith.

If he can convince us that prayer no longer matters, our voice becomes quiet.

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If he can convince us that worship makes no difference, our praise becomes silent.

If he can convince us that our children will never come back to God, we stop speaking God's promises over them.

If he can convince us that our marriage cannot be restored, we stop believing for healing.

If he can convince us that revival is impossible, we stop praying for revival.

The battle is not simply against our circumstances. The battle is against our confession.

This principle appears throughout Scripture.

The Bible repeatedly teaches that God has given extraordinary significance to what comes out of our mouths.

> *Death and life are in the power of the tongue…*
> **PROVERBS 18:21 (KJV)**

Our words do not possess magical power, but they reveal the condition of our faith. Jesus Himself said,

> *…out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.*
> **MATTHEW 12:34 (KJV)**

When faith fills the heart, faith eventually fills the mouth.

When fear fills the heart, fear eventually fills the mouth.

This is why Satan constantly attacks our thoughts. If he can shape our thinking long enough, he eventually influences our speech. Once our speech changes, our expectations begin to change as well.

Eventually we stop saying things like,

"God is able."

"My family will be saved."

"God is still working."

"I trust Him."

Instead we begin saying,

"Nothing is ever going to change."

"This is just who I am."

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“God must have forgotten me.”

“Maybe miracles are for someone else.”

Notice how every one of those statements gives away vision before circumstances have actually changed.

This is exactly why Pastor Tisdale emphasized that Satan wants both our vision and our voice. He explained that if the enemy can blind us so we cannot see hope and silence us so we no longer speak faith, he has accomplished something incredibly destructive without ever taking our physical life.

To make this even clearer, Pastor used an illustration from military history. He explained that certain ammunition was designed not necessarily to kill, but to wound, because one wounded soldier often removes several others from the battlefield as people stop to care for him. He then applied that illustration spiritually. The enemy sometimes seeks to wound believers because wounded believers often discourage other believers around them.

This is an important lesson for the Church.

When discouragement goes unchecked, it rarely remains personal.

A discouraged parent influences the atmosphere of the home.

A hopeless leader affects those they lead.

A fearful Christian can unintentionally spread fear throughout an entire small group.

Likewise, faith is also contagious.

Hope strengthens hope.

Courage inspires courage.

Prayer awakens prayer.

Worship ignites worship.

This explains why Satan works so aggressively against our voice. He knows that one believer speaking faith can influence an entire family, while one believer speaking unbelief can do the same.

Throughout Scripture we see God’s people deliberately choosing to speak His promises before they ever saw the fulfillment of those promises.

David declared,

> *I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.*
> **PSALM 27:13 (KJV)**

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Notice that David did not say he already saw God's goodness. He believed first. His words reflected faith before his circumstances reflected victory.

The writer of Hebrews gives similar instruction.

> *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)*
> **HEBREWS 10:23 (KJV)**

The word profession means confession or declaration. God calls us to continue speaking His promises even while waiting for their fulfillment. Faith is not pretending that difficulties do not exist. Faith is declaring that God remains faithful despite those difficulties.

During the service, Pastor Tisdale spoke directly to individuals who had experienced prolonged disappointment, particularly those believing for physical healing. Rather than allowing disappointment to redefine God's character, he encouraged them to refuse to surrender either their vision or their confession. His exhortation was simple but powerful: "Don't lose your vision… Don't let your faith be muted."

This is where many believers face one of the greatest spiritual battles of their lives. It is relatively easy to praise God after the miracle has arrived. The greater challenge is continuing to praise Him while still waiting. It is easy to declare victory after prayers have been answered. The greater challenge is continuing to speak God's promises while circumstances remain unchanged.

This is not denial.

This is biblical hope.

The enemy wants us to interpret God's faithfulness through our circumstances.

God invites us to interpret our circumstances through His faithfulness.

Every time we worship while carrying unanswered questions, we are declaring that God is still worthy.

Every time we pray after another disappointment, we are declaring that His promises are still true.

Every time we speak hope over our children, our marriage, our church, or our future, we are refusing to surrender the voice that God has given us.

That is why spiritual warfare is not only fought in dramatic moments at an altar. It is fought every morning when we choose whether we will repeat the lies of the enemy or proclaim the truth of God's Word. The enemy may attack our thoughts, our emotions, and our circumstances, but as long as Christ remains Lord of our lives, he does not have the authority to determine our confession. Our voice belongs to the King, and when our words continue to agree with His promises, we declare to both heaven and hell that our faith remains anchored in Jesus Christ alone.

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✦ REFLECT & WRITE

What has the enemy tried to silence in you — your prayer, your praise, your hope for someone you love? Write a declaration of faith to speak over it this week.

PART 03

EVERY BELIEVER IS CALLED TO MINISTER

03

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One of the most beautiful moments of the service occurred when Pastor Tisdale reminded the congregation that ministry is not reserved for pastors, elders, or licensed ministers. Instead, he challenged everyone to recognize that every Spirit-filled believer has been entrusted with the privilege of ministering to others. He encouraged the church by saying, “I want you to feel the liberty to pray for people. You don’t need a license, you don’t need an appointment, you don’t need a position. The Spirit of God that has filled you… gives you the spiritual authority to pray for people around you.”

Those words capture one of the most important truths of the New Testament: ministry belongs to the entire body of Christ. The Holy Spirit was never intended to work only through those standing behind a pulpit. He desires to work through every believer who is willing to be available.

Many Christians unknowingly develop the idea that the pastor is the one responsible for all spiritual ministry within the church. If someone is hurting, they believe the pastor should pray for them. If someone needs encouragement, they wait for a minister to notice. While God has certainly called pastors to shepherd His people, Scripture consistently teaches that the health of the Church depends upon every member functioning as part of the body. The ministry of the Church was never designed to flow from one individual; it was designed to flow through an entire community of believers who have been filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Apostle Paul explains this beautifully when he writes, “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal” (1 Corinthians 12:7). The gifts of the Spirit are not distributed to create spiritual celebrities but to strengthen the entire body of Christ. Every believer has received something that can bless someone else. Some have the gift of encouragement. Others have wisdom, mercy, generosity, hospitality, teaching, faith, or intercession. God intentionally distributes His gifts throughout the Church so that no one person possesses everything, and every believer learns to depend upon one another. This creates unity rather than independence and reminds us that every member has a valuable role to fulfill.

Paul continues this thought by comparing the Church to the human body. “And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee” (1 Corinthians 12:21). Every part of the body has a unique function that contributes to the health of the whole. The eye provides vision, but it cannot pick something up. The hand can serve, but it cannot walk. Likewise, no pastor, teacher, or ministry leader can personally meet every need within a growing congregation. God never intended for one person to carry the entire burden of ministry. Instead, He designed His Church so that His love, encouragement, comfort, and strength would flow through many believers serving together under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

This was exactly what Pastor Tisdale encouraged during the service. Rather than asking everyone to remain in their seats while only church leaders prayed, he invited believers to look around the sanctuary, recognize those carrying burdens, and simply begin praying with them. He explained that there are often people sitting beside us whose struggles are known by friends long before they are known by pastors. Sometimes the person God has chosen to encourage them is not the one standing on the platform but the faithful brother or sister sitting only a few seats away. This reflects the biblical model of body ministry, where every believer becomes a vessel through whom God can minister His grace.

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Jesus Himself demonstrated this principle throughout His earthly ministry. Although thousands followed Him, He intentionally invested in ordinary men and women, preparing them to continue His work after His ascension. Before sending out the seventy disciples, He gave them authority to minister in His name (Luke 10:1). Later, after the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, the Church did not depend exclusively upon the apostles. Ministry spread rapidly because ordinary believers carried the Gospel into homes, cities, and communities. The Book of Acts presents a Church where every believer understood that following Jesus also meant serving others.

This understanding changes the way we approach every church service. Instead of asking ourselves, “What will I receive today?” we begin asking, “Lord, who can I encourage today? Who needs someone to pray with them? Who needs hope? Who needs to know they are not alone?” When we come with that mindset, church is transformed from an event we attend into a family where every member actively participates in God’s work.

Of course, this freedom to minister is never separated from biblical wisdom or spiritual accountability. Pastor Tisdale wisely reminded the congregation that while everyone has the freedom to pray for one another, everything should remain healthy, biblical, and submitted to spiritual leadership. The Holy Spirit never produces confusion or disorder. His ministry always reflects the character of Christ, builds up the Church, and operates in harmony with God’s Word. Freedom in the Spirit is not the absence of order; it is the presence of divine leadership.

The Apostle Paul reinforces this balance in Ephesians 4:11-12, where he explains that Christ gave pastors and teachers “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry.” This verse reveals that the primary responsibility of church leaders is not to perform all the ministry themselves but to equip God’s people to minister effectively. Healthy leadership multiplies ministry by preparing others to serve. A mature church is not measured by how much the pastor accomplishes alone but by how many believers have discovered their calling to serve one another.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle that keeps many believers from ministering is the feeling that they are not qualified. The enemy constantly reminds people of their failures, weaknesses, and imperfections, hoping they will remain silent. Yet Pastor Tisdale reminded the church that God has never waited for perfect people before using them. Jesus Christ is the only perfect person who has ever walked this earth, yet throughout Scripture He consistently chose imperfect men and women through whom His perfect power could be displayed. Our effectiveness in ministry has never depended upon our perfection; it depends upon our willingness to be available to the Holy Spirit.

When every believer embraces this calling, something beautiful begins to happen. The church becomes more than a place where people come to receive ministry; it becomes a community where everyone participates in the ministry of Christ. Encouragement flows naturally, burdens are shared, prayers become personal, and no one has to fight life’s battles alone. This is the picture of the New Testament Church, and it is exactly what we witnessed during our service. As believers prayed together across the sanctuary, we were reminded that the Holy Spirit does not minister only through one voice. He ministers through His entire body, bringing strength, hope, healing, and encouragement to His people through ordinary believers

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who simply make themselves available to Him.

✦ REFLECT & WRITE

What has kept you from believing you are qualified to minister to someone else? Who is one person you sense God calling you to encourage or pray for?

PART 04

WORSHIP IS ONE OF OUR GREATEST WEAPONS IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE

04

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As the service continued, something remarkable happened. There was no rush to move to the next item on the schedule. Instead, worship continued to rise throughout the sanctuary as people prayed, wept, encouraged one another, and sought the presence of God. To an outside observer, it may have seemed as though nothing was happening. Yet from a biblical perspective, one of the greatest spiritual battles of the day was taking place. This is because worship is far more than music. Worship is a declaration of God's worth, and every time God's people choose to exalt Him in the middle of difficulty, they are making a powerful statement to both heaven and hell about who truly reigns.

One of the greatest misunderstandings about worship is the belief that it exists primarily for our benefit. While worship certainly strengthens our faith and refreshes our spirit, that is not its primary purpose. Worship is first and foremost directed toward God. It acknowledges His greatness, His holiness, His faithfulness, and His authority regardless of what we are experiencing. In other words, worship is an act of surrender. It shifts our attention away from our problems and places it back on the One who is greater than every problem we face.

Throughout Scripture, worship consistently appears before victory. We often imagine people worshipping after God has answered their prayers, but the Bible repeatedly shows God's people worshipping before they saw the breakthrough. Their praise was not the result of victory; it was an expression of faith that victory belonged to God.

One of the clearest examples is found in the life of King Jehoshaphat. When Judah was surrounded by an overwhelming enemy, the people naturally expected to prepare for battle. Instead, God gave them instructions that seemed almost unreasonable. Rather than placing the strongest soldiers at the front of the army, He instructed them to send the worshippers first.

> *…Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever. And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir…*
> **2 CHRONICLES 20:21-22 (KJV)**

Notice the timing. The battle did not end before they praised. The battle began to change when they praised. Their worship was not passive. It became an act of faith that declared, "Our confidence is not in our military strength but in the Lord who fights for us."

The same principle appears in Acts 16 when Paul and Silas found themselves beaten, chained, and imprisoned. From a human perspective, they had every reason to complain, question God, or lose hope. Instead, the Bible tells us that around midnight they prayed and sang praises unto God. They did not worship because they were comfortable. They worshipped because they knew that God's character had not changed even though their circumstances had.

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> *And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God… And suddenly there was a great earthquake…*
> **ACTS 16:25-26 (KJV)**

The prison doors did not open because worship contains magical power. They opened because God responded to the faith of two believers who refused to allow suffering to silence their praise. Their worship proclaimed that Rome could chain their hands, but it could not chain their spirits.

This helps us understand something Pastor Tisdale emphasized throughout the service. He repeatedly encouraged the congregation not to lose their voice. He reminded everyone that the enemy desires to silence worship because worship continually declares the victory of Christ. Near the conclusion of the service he challenged the church to stop focusing exclusively on what God had not yet done and instead recover their song by remembering His goodness and speaking His blessings over their families. That statement captures the heart of biblical worship. Praise is not rooted in perfect circumstances; it is rooted in the unchanging character of God.

This is one of Satan's greatest frustrations. He can create pressure, but he cannot determine our response. He can bring temptation, but he cannot force our worship. He can whisper lies, but he cannot remove the truth of God's Word. Every time a believer lifts their hands while carrying unanswered prayers, every time a family worships while waiting for a miracle, every time a church sings through seasons of uncertainty, the kingdom of darkness is reminded that Jesus is still Lord.

Perhaps this explains why Scripture places such importance on praise. David did not merely write songs because he enjoyed music. Many of the Psalms were written while he was running for his life, hiding in caves, facing betrayal, or grieving profound loss. Yet over and over again he made a deliberate decision to magnify God above his circumstances.

> *I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.*
> **PSALM 34:1 (KJV)**

Notice that David says, "I will." Worship begins as a decision before it becomes a feeling. If we wait until every circumstance improves before we worship, we may never worship at all. Mature believers learn that praise is not the reward of victory; it is often the pathway through which God strengthens us for the battle.

Another beautiful example is found in Psalm 149.

> *Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand.*
> **PSALM 149:6 (KJV)**

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The psalmist intentionally joins praise and spiritual battle together. This does not mean that singing itself defeats Satan, but that a heart filled with worship remains firmly aligned with God's truth. Worship renews our perspective. It reminds us who God is, who we are, and where our hope is found. It silences the lies of fear by replacing them with the promises of Scripture.

This is why worship occupied such a central place in our service. It was never intended to entertain or simply fill time. It became the language of faith while people prayed for one another, sought healing, interceded for families, and declared God's promises over their lives. The songs created an atmosphere where hearts became receptive to the work of the Holy Spirit, allowing people to surrender fear, discouragement, and anxiety while fixing their eyes on Christ.

As believers, we must learn that worship is not confined to Sunday mornings. Spiritual warfare often begins on Monday before we leave for work, on Tuesday while raising our children, on Wednesday during unexpected disappointments, or on Friday when weariness sets in. In those ordinary moments, worship becomes a declaration that God is still worthy. It reminds our hearts that His faithfulness has not changed simply because our circumstances have.

When we worship, we are not trying to convince God to come near. Through Jesus Christ, He has already promised, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). Instead, worship awakens our awareness of His presence. It lifts our eyes above our struggles and restores our confidence in the One who has already overcome the world. This is why the Church has always been a worshipping Church. Before we preach, before we strategize, before we serve, we worship. And when spiritual warfare intensifies, our worship does not diminish. It becomes even stronger, because our greatest declaration in the middle of every battle is still the same:

Jesus Christ is worthy of all glory, all honor, and all praise.

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✦ REFLECT & WRITE

Where do your circumstances make it hard to worship right now? Write out a prayer of praise you can pray before you see the answer.

PART 05

HOW DO WE KNOW IT WAS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

05

WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT TAKES OVER

One of the most important questions a believer can ask after a service like the one we experienced is, “How do we know that what happened was truly the work of the Holy Spirit?” This is not a skeptical question; it is a biblical one. Scripture never asks us to blindly accept every spiritual experience without discernment. At the same time, it also warns us not to reject the genuine work of God simply because it makes us uncomfortable or does not fit our expectations. The Christian life requires both faith and discernment. We must remain open to everything God desires to do while carefully measuring every experience against the truth of His Word.

The Apostle John writes,

> *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God…*
> **1 JOHN 4:1 (KJV)**

John’s instruction teaches us that discernment is part of spiritual maturity. Every emotional experience is not necessarily spiritual, and every spiritual experience is not merely emotional. The question is never, “Did people become emotional?” Human beings naturally express emotion when they encounter God. The real question is, “What was the source of that emotion, and what fruit did it produce?”

Throughout Scripture, whenever people encountered the presence of God, they responded in different ways. Some fell on their faces in worship. Others wept. Some rejoiced with overwhelming gladness. Others stood in silent awe. Isaiah cried out because he became aware of his own unworthiness. Peter fell before Jesus and confessed his sinfulness. The disciples on the Day of Pentecost praised God in languages they had never learned. The common denominator was never the outward expression. The common denominator was that every genuine encounter drew people closer to God rather than drawing attention to themselves.

This is why Jesus taught us to evaluate spiritual experiences by their fruit rather than by their excitement.

> *Ye shall know them by their fruits.*
> **MATTHEW 7:16**

Fruit always tells the true story.

Did the experience produce repentance?

Did it increase faith?

Did it deepen our love for Jesus?

Did it create greater unity within the body?

Did it lead people toward holiness?

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Did it magnify Christ instead of individuals?

If the answer to those questions is yes, then we are seeing evidence that the Holy Spirit is at work.

During the service, there were several clear indicators that the focus remained on Jesus rather than on personalities or emotions. People were not encouraged to seek an emotional experience for its own sake. Instead, they were called to pray, worship, encourage one another, believe for healing, and place their confidence in the authority of the name of Jesus. Throughout the service, Pastor Tisdale continually pointed people back to Christ, reminding them that their hope was not found in human ability but in the power of God.

One of the simplest tests we can apply to any spiritual experience is: If the attention remains centered on Christ, His Gospel, His Word, and His Kingdom, we have strong reason to rejoice. If the attention becomes centered on personalities, unusual manifestations, or sensational experiences, we should proceed with caution.

One of the most powerful moments during the service came when Pastor Tisdale addressed the danger of allowing skepticism to replace worship. After speaking about the miracle God had performed in Vernon's life, he challenged those who might dismiss God's work through doubt or excessive intellectualism. He warned that religion can become so focused on explaining everything that it loses the ability to simply stand in awe of what God has done.

This is a warning every generation needs to hear.

There are two dangers that constantly threaten the Church.

One danger is emotionalism without biblical foundation.

The other is intellectualism without spiritual expectancy.

One accepts everything without discernment.

The other rejects everything that cannot be fully explained.

Neither represents biblical Christianity.

The disciples experienced miracles they could not explain.

The prophets witnessed visions beyond human understanding.

The early church experienced supernatural demonstrations of God's power.

Yet none of these experiences caused them to abandon Scripture. Instead, every genuine move of God confirmed and fulfilled His Word.

This balance is beautifully demonstrated in the Berean believers.

WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT TAKES OVER

> *…they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*
> **ACTS 17:11 (KJV)**

Notice their attitude. They were open. They were teachable. But they were also discerning.

This is the posture every believer should cultivate. We should never become so suspicious that we cannot recognize the moving of the Holy Spirit. Neither should we become so easily impressed that we stop measuring everything by Scripture.

Perhaps one of the clearest evidences that the Holy Spirit was leading the service was what happened after the extended time of prayer. People continued responding to God. Individuals chose to be baptized. Others received biblical instruction before entering the waters of baptism. Pastor Tisdale even paused to explain why Tampa Life intentionally teaches people before baptizing them, emphasizing that baptism is not merely a tradition but a covenant identity with Jesus Christ.

The service did not drift away from biblical truth. Instead, the presence of God led people deeper into biblical obedience.

That is always the work of the Holy Spirit.

He convicts.

He calls people to repentance.

He strengthens faith.

He points us toward Christ.

He leads us into obedience.

He builds the Church.

He glorifies Jesus.

When those things are happening, we should never fear giving Him room to work.

As believers, we must learn to pray with both humility and discernment. Rather than asking God to simply fit within our plans, we should ask Him to shape our hearts so that we can recognize His voice whenever He chooses to move. Our goal is not to manufacture extraordinary experiences, nor is it to resist them. Our goal is to remain so deeply rooted in God’s Word and so sensitive to His Spirit that whenever He chooses to interrupt our agenda, we have the wisdom to recognize His presence and the faith to follow wherever He leads.

WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT TAKES OVER

✦ REFLECT & WRITE

Looking back at a recent spiritual experience, what fruit did it produce in you — more repentance, more faith, more love for Jesus?

CONCLUSION

WHEN HEAVEN INTERRUPTS OUR PLANS

WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT TAKES OVER

As we come to the end of this study, we must remember that what we experienced was not simply an emotional church service or an unusual Sunday. It was an opportunity to witness something that has been happening since the pages of Scripture were first written: God chose to interrupt human plans in order to accomplish eternal purposes. Throughout the Bible, the greatest moments of spiritual transformation rarely happened because everything went according to schedule. They happened because ordinary men and women recognized that God was moving and were willing to surrender their own agenda so they could follow His.

That is exactly what happened during our service. Pastor Tisdale came prepared with a message, but he also came prepared to obey the Holy Spirit. There is a significant difference between being prepared to preach and being prepared to follow God's leading. Every pastor should diligently study, pray, and prepare to feed God's people. Yet there are moments when the greatest act of leadership is not delivering every point in the outline but recognizing that the Chief Shepherd is already ministering directly to His people. Throughout the service, he repeatedly acknowledged that the church was experiencing a unique move of God's presence and intentionally chose to shepherd that moment rather than rush past it.

This is one of the beautiful characteristics of a Spirit-filled church. We deeply value the preaching of God's Word because faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17). We also understand that the same Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures continues to apply those Scriptures to people's lives in living and powerful ways. Sometimes He teaches through preaching. Sometimes He convicts during worship. Sometimes He heals while believers are praying together. Sometimes He restores hope through the encouragement of another Christian. The method may change, but the source never changes. It is always the Holy Spirit leading people toward Jesus Christ.

Perhaps one of the greatest lessons we should carry with us is that spiritual warfare is not something reserved for a few extraordinary moments in life. Every believer will face seasons of spiritual resistance. There will be times when fear attempts to replace faith, discouragement tries to silence our prayers, disappointment whispers that God has forgotten us, and weariness tempts us to stop believing for the promises He has spoken over our lives. In those moments we must remember one of the central truths of this lesson: the enemy often attacks our vision and our voice before he attacks anything else. If he can convince us to stop believing, stop praying, stop worshiping, and stop speaking God's promises, he has already weakened our effectiveness. That is why we must guard our faith so carefully and continually fill our minds with the truth of God's Word.

We also learned that God never intended us to fight these battles alone. One of the most beautiful expressions of the Church is that we become the hands and feet of Christ to one another. Yesterday reminded us that ministry does not belong only to pastors or church leaders. Every Spirit-filled believer has been called to pray, encourage, strengthen, and stand beside those who are carrying heavy burdens. When one member of the body suffers, the whole body responds. When one believer rejoices, the whole church celebrates. This is the picture of the New Testament Church, where the Holy Spirit ministers through an entire community rather than through one individual alone.

WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT TAKES OVER

Finally, we were reminded that worship is never simply music. Worship is our declaration that Jesus remains worthy regardless of our circumstances. We worship when prayers are answered, but we also worship while we are still waiting. We worship after miracles, but we also worship while believing for miracles. Every song becomes an act of faith, every prayer becomes a declaration of hope, and every lifted hand becomes a testimony that Christ still reigns. When God's people choose to worship in the middle of spiritual warfare, they are declaring that the enemy may influence circumstances, but he will never deserve their praise. Their worship belongs to God alone.

As believers, we should never become people who are so committed to our schedules that we miss the voice of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, neither should we pursue emotional experiences for their own sake. Our desire must always be to remain deeply rooted in Scripture while remaining completely available to the leading of God's Spirit. The healthiest churches are not those that choose between truth and the Spirit; they faithfully embrace both. They preach the Word with conviction, they worship with sincerity, they pray with expectation, and when the Holy Spirit chooses to move in extraordinary ways, they respond with humility, discernment, and joyful obedience.

May we become believers who are always prepared, yet never rigid; deeply rooted in God's Word, yet continually sensitive to His voice. May we never allow fear, disappointment, or spiritual resistance to silence our worship or steal the vision God has placed within us. Instead, may we continue to pray, continue to believe, continue to worship, and continue to minister to one another until the day Christ returns. For wherever the Holy Spirit is welcomed, Jesus is glorified, lives are transformed, and the Kingdom of God advances.

> *Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*
> **2 CORINTHIANS 3:17 (KJV)**

May that liberty continue to define our homes, our families, our church, and our lives, as we faithfully follow the leading of the Holy Spirit wherever He chooses to lead us.

WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT TAKES OVER

✦ REFLECT & WRITE

What is one area of your life where you want to stay prepared, yet stay sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading? Write it as a prayer of surrender.