



*Return to
Your First
Love*

**A 21-DAY
DEVOTIONAL JOURNEY**

By Kathy Kubiak

Week 3

RETURN TO YOUR FIRST LOVE

A 21-Day Journey of Exploration

Day 15 – The Three in One

Father, I feel like today you want me to interact with you on my understanding of the Trinity. You are triune in nature; one God with 3 distinct expressions, 3 personalities, all wrapped up in one being. A lot of us really struggle with this concept, yet a friend gave an example that brought some clarity to me. I as a woman, have different expressions to different people depending on how they are connected to me. To my kids, I am a Mother; to my own parents, I am a Daughter; to those outside my family, I may be an intimate Friend. I am just one person, yet 3 distinct roles can be seen.

It has helped me to think of your triune nature as different facets of a whole. Your nature is greater than ours, and you existed before time began as we know it, and that makes it difficult to wrap our minds around it, but you left us some clues in your word.

The book Genesis sets the stage in v. 1-2: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (NIV). Genesis 1:26 says, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (NIV).

In John 1:1-3 we learn “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (NIV). John 1:14 tells us The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (NIV).

The question I am pondering this morning is, how do I interact with the different facets of your nature in prayer? I have comfort in relating to you as Father, and have learned to connect with Jesus as my Lord, Savior, and friend, but how am I connecting with your Holy Spirit in relationship? As part of your being, you invite me to explore this relationship in greater depth and intimacy.

Holy Spirit, what do I need to know about you? How do I properly relate to you as the 3rd person of the Trinity? Teach me to interact with you about your role in my life. Thank you for indwelling me and revealing the heart of the Father for me. As I seek you, may you convict me of areas in my life that are out of alignment with you and challenge me to repent and do those things I did at first.

RETURN TO YOUR FIRST LOVE

A 21-Day Journey of Exploration

Day 16 – Come Holy Spirit

Come Holy Spirit; I sense this is what you are speaking about today. You already indwell me, but you want to be invited into all places of my being. I welcome you to speak to my heart, and draw me into a love relationship with you; I welcome you into my mind, and ask you to illuminate those strongholds of thought that are contrary to your truth; I welcome you into my emotions, which are often indicators of areas of brokenness and trauma from my past, I welcome you into my will, and ask you to reveal areas that are driven by pride rather than humility, and I welcome you into my spirit that I may fellowship with you in the spiritual realm.

I find in 1 Cor 2:14 that “The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit” (NIV).

The words of Matt. 7:7-8 are rolling through my mind this morning also: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened” (NIV).

This passage paints a picture of one who is hungering for more of your presence Lord. I am asking for more of your Holy Spirit today; as I seek you as the source of truth rather than my own understanding, you promise to open the door to more of you.

There is a phrase that is used in cultivating relationships; it says, “stay curious”. The intent behind the phrase is to stay curious about others and ask questions to draw them out. I believe this is also what you are speaking to my spirit this morning; you are saying to me to keep asking questions and allowing you to provide the answers. You are telling me that the way to deeper intimacy with you is an ongoing dialogue; that I need to move beyond my intellectual understanding of you, to one that embraces you from my seat of desire, which is my heart.

The primary question on my heart this morning is Holy Spirit, how am I grieving you? What aspect of my heart am I stiff-necked and in rebellion against you? How do I tune in to my emotions to allow you to show me strongholds in my thinking that you want to reveal and deal with? What am I seeking from other relationships that I should be receiving from you?

Holy Spirit, thank you for your work in me; thank you for quickening my spirit to show me those areas of my heart and mind that are out of alignment and in need of your correction. Holy Spirit, I ask you to give me discernment and understanding of the relationship that is available to me. I ask for greater discernment of how you speak to me and how I can attune my spirit to your frequency. I commit myself to doing the hard work as you reveal them to me.

RETURN TO YOUR FIRST LOVE

A 21-Day Journey of Exploration

Day 17 – Heart Check

As I am sitting here this morning seeking to hear the voice of your Spirit, I feel that I am to not move on too quickly but to linger. You want to speak to my heart some more on how I am in rebellion to your Spirit. Oh Lord, that is difficult to hear but necessary I know!

Lord, you created me as an emotional being, yet if I am afraid to connect at the point of emotion, I am denying my intended design. I am not honoring you in the way I am made. Emotions are an indicator of what is happening within us; they reveal our heart. We can err in 2 directions with our emotions; either we give them over emphasis and allow them to rule over us in an unhealthy manner, or we suppress them and do not allow them to have their intended effect upon our heart.

In doing a heart check this morning, I find that you are putting your finger on the walls I have erected to protect my heart from feeling overwhelmed. I have not allowed my heart to be radically touched by the pain and suffering in our world as I am afraid to experience that kind of emotional connection. Lord I feel so inadequate to meet the needs of so many around me. I know the answer does not lie in me connecting with them on an emotional level and me carrying that emotion; the answer is tapping into more of your Spirit and allowing you to flow through me. I must allow my heart and emotions to be touched though and stay in that place of asking you how I am to respond in that moment. It is not my wisdom, but yours. My own desire is to protect my heart from experiencing such depths of emotion; your word calls me to rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn (Matt 12:15 NIV). I am not sufficient to carry their pain, but your Spirit within me is sufficient.

Next question is, am I being transparent with others regarding my own struggles and insecurities? Am I letting others into my heart even though I know there is a risk of being wounded, or am I holding them at arm's length? Am I fostering greater intimacy in those relationships that you are highlighting to me as individuals you want me to connect with at a deeper level, or am I content to stay in the shallows and not risk allowing people into my own little world? Lord, you are a relational God; the very fact that there are 3 facets of who you are and different ways in which you interact with us show us the value of relationships. I am learning to interact with those different facets of your personality. You also bring different people into our lives in different seasons to provide what we need. Your word tells us that iron sharpens iron. Sometimes we need others to speak into those areas of our lives that are out of alignment, but if it is done without love and a foundation of relationship, it wounds rather than builds up. Lord, teach me to allow others into my world and build those relationships so that they can speak the truth in love!

Holy Spirit, show me where my heart is still in rebellion. Where am I still fortifying walls of distance and half-truths to protect my heart? Where am I afraid to go deeper and be more transparent in my relationships? What insecurities are keeping me from trusting you? What insecurities are keeping me from trusting others? What insecurities are keeping me from emotionally connecting with others at the level of their pain? Thank you for your revelations in my spirit!

RETURN TO YOUR FIRST LOVE

A 21-Day Journey of Exploration

Day 18 – Spirit of Wisdom and Truth

Holy Spirit, what does it mean to return to my First Love with you? You are the representation of truth and wisdom; you are my counselor, my advocate, and intercessor before the Father. You speak directly to my spirit and mind and show me where my thoughts do not line up with the thoughts of the Father.

In John 16:13-15 Jesus says “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.” (NIV). In John 14:23 Jesus says “But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (NIV).

Holy Spirit, you remind me of the words of Jesus, and show me how to apply them to my daily life. You reveal to me what I need to know in the moment as I seek your wisdom. You do not speak of your own accord; you speak only the heart of the Father and the truth of the Son. As I am faced with choices each day, you invite me to ask you what my response should be; you convict my spirit of the thoughts and attitudes of my heart that are out of alignment. As I return to my First Love, I am seeking the wisdom and truth you impart as I involve you in my daily life. May I meditate on the words of Jesus, and ask you to burn them deep into my heart; bring to life the scriptures and quicken them in my spirit when I encounter situations where I need your wisdom.

You also help me when I don't know how to pray; Romans 8:26-27 says “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God” (NIV).

Holy Spirit, I can come and ask you to help me pray according to the will of the Father; you are one with the Father, and know his heart, and the Father knows your mind. You call me to be obedient to seek your wisdom and truth, and to be obedient to what you reveal to me; thank you that I do not have to understand it all. Your revelation is given at the time it is needed; thank you again for speaking the heart of the Father to me.

RETURN TO YOUR FIRST LOVE

A 21-Day Journey of Exploration

Day 19 – What’s the Fruit?

Father, I thank you again for sending your Holy Spirit to reside in my innermost being, and to empower me to become more like Jesus who was our example as he walked on this Earth. I know that as I submit myself in obedience to you I allow your Spirit to flow in me and through me. Thank you for the fruit of the Holy Spirit’s working in my life – Eph. 5:22-23 says “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law” (NIV). When I allow your Spirit to work within me, these qualities are expressed in increasing measure in my life.

As I was reviewing the above verse in various translations, The Passion Translation stood out to me:

“But the fruit, produced by the Holy Spirit within you, is divine love in all its varied expressions: joy that overflows, peace that subdues, patience that endures, kindness in action, a life full of virtue, faith that prevails, gentleness of heart, and strength of spirit. Never set the law above these qualities, for they are meant to be limitless.”

I came across the translator’s notes in the Passion Translation that brought greater clarity to this verse:

There is clear textual inference that the “fruit” (singular) of the Holy Spirit is love, with the other virtues displaying aspects of the greatest quality of Spirit-life, *agape* love. The translator has chosen to supply action to these virtues, for they are not meant to be abstract virtues, but made visible with actions.

Just as the greatest commandment in the Bible is summed up in LOVE, the Fruit of the Spirit can also be summed up in love. The qualities that are listed after love in the verse are the fruit that is born in my life as I allow your love to fill me and flow through me. These qualities are not something that I have DO, but qualities that are formed within me by your Spirit as I BECOME more like Jesus. By allowing your Holy Spirit to convict me of those areas in which your love is not being expressed in my life in full measure, I submit myself to you and ask you to empower me to be a greater expression of your love to those around me.

A second note on this passage from the same translation also caught my attention:

Although the word self is not found in this verse, most translations render this as “self-control.” The word is actually “lordship,” or by implication “spirit-strength.”

I believe you are saying to me that as I submit my spirit to your Spirit, I am growing in spiritual strength in my own being. This self-control is not something that I exercise by myself; it is a recognition that as I submit my spirit to your Spirit, I am growing in spiritual maturity. This totally changes how I look at self-control; instead of my focus being on something speaks of restriction, you are inviting me to lean into my relationship with the Holy Spirit. Thank you for that insight!

Father, I confess that I have spent much of my life trying to “get it right” and do this Christian walk in my own strength; teach me how to rest in you and allow you to change my character from the inside out through the work of YOUR Spirit within me, rather than by me trying to measure up to external expectations. May I press into relationship with you and seek to understand how your LOVE is the root of everything. If I keep that one concept in proper perspective, everything else falls into place. Thank you, Poppa, for your unending love!

RETURN TO YOUR FIRST LOVE

A 21-Day Journey of Exploration

Day 20 – The Greater Works

Holy Spirit, there is more I need to explore of you. When Jesus returned to the Father, he sent you in his place; you are the enabling power that resides within me to accomplish the Father's will. It is rather humbling to think that I am a container for God; that you dwell within my spiritual being, and interact with my mind, will and emotions. How am I getting to know you more intimately? I must confess, much of my faith walk I have not given you as much attention as you deserve.

So how do I connect with you? I can much more easily understand my relationship with the Father and Jesus; those seem to come more naturally for me. As I explore what I know about you, I see you throughout the New Testament as comforter, helper, intercessor, and that you teach us things and bring them to remembrance. These are the aspects I have more readily connected with during most of my faith walk. But you also are the power source for the greater works that Jesus said his disciples will do; John 14:12 tells us "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." (NIV). Jesus also told his disciples before ascending back to his Father in heaven "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth." (Acts 1:8, NIV). Holy Spirit, you are the source of power that raised Jesus from the dead thereby breaking the curse of Satan over this Earth; you restored the authority of mankind that was initially given to Adam at creation and returned that power and authority to the Sons and Daughters of the most high God here on this Earth.

So, what does this look like? I know that you indwell us and reside within our spirit; that you speak to us in our minds as well as intuitions of the heart. You come upon people sometimes with peace and encouragement, comfort us in times of despair and grief, help us understand when we are seeking wisdom and God's truth, you intercede with us and for us before the Father with your heavenly language when we don't even understand or have words to pray, and you bring God's word to mind and help us to remember his faithfulness to us. You are also the Spirit of Prophecy and give us divine wisdom and truths to speak and pray over others.

At other times your power comes upon people in great physical manifestations, whether that be boldness of speech, shaking, laughter, being so overshadowed by your presence that one loses consciousness of their physical surroundings, physical and emotional healings brought through the power of your spoken word and the impartation of your spirit through the laying on of hands in prayer, as well as miracles, signs and wonders that are occurrences in the physical realm that supersede the laws of nature.

How have I experienced you Holy Spirit? First, I know that I have encountered you in the secret place as an overshadowing presence, as a pulsating force of energy. Every cell in my body seems energized and responsive to you. When I close my eyes, I see an aura of color that is pulsating and flowing; it is beautiful and peaceful. When I allow my thoughts to be tuned to your spiritual frequency and ask for your spiritual truths, I receive understanding and wisdom into the written

RETURN TO YOUR FIRST LOVE

A 21-Day Journey of Exploration

word, as well as insights and strategies that are beyond my natural thoughts. I test those understandings to verify they are rooted in the nature and character of God.

I also have experienced you in praying for others; as I am obedient to open my mouth to pray, you fill my mind with your thoughts and my mouth with words of insight, blessing, revelation and declarations. When I start to pray I often have just a small understanding, but you guide and direct my prayers to bring clarity and wisdom. As I am faithful to partner with you in this, you bring declarations to mind that allow me to speak out your word with your authority and power into the spiritual realm. Your spoken word shifts the spiritual atmosphere and brings your spiritual Kingdom into the physical realm.

As I have partnered with you in this way Holy Spirit, I have seen you bring physical and emotional healing to people and have seen people delivered from bondage to the realm of spiritual darkness. I have seen the power of you at work in people, all because I said yes to speaking out what you have put into my heart. Holy Spirit, I ask you to use me in your service to open the eyes of the blind to the good news that they can be set free from those things that they have been bound by. You are fully able to bring healing to all areas of being, whether that is physical, emotional, or spiritual.

There is so much more I have yet to experience; Jesus said in John 14:12 that we would do even greater works than he did while on this earth. But I also know that I must be careful to seek the giver of the gift, rather than the gift itself. May my pursuit be for you God the fullness of your expressions. As my Father, I seek to be the embodiment of your love for others as I walk in the authority you have given me as a child of the King. As my bridegroom Jesus, you are the one who showed me what love in the flesh looks like, one who loves me intimately and who is preparing a place in heaven for me for eternity. As the Holy Spirit who dwells within me, he connects me with the wisdom of God and empowers me to do those things that God prepared in advance for me to do.

May I gaze upon the fullness of you in all your expressions as I do so I am being changed into your image. May I be careful not to seek the gift rather than the giver; keep my eyes fixed on you. Thank you that you are perfecting me to the fullness of your glory!

RETURN TO YOUR FIRST LOVE

A 21-Day Journey of Exploration

Day 21 – The Bridegroom

Jesus, this morning I am reflecting on you as my Bridegroom. I know from the scriptures that John the Baptist was sent as a messenger in advance of your ministry to prepare the way for you. John 3:28-29 says:

You heard me tell you before that I am not the Messiah, but certainly I am the messenger sent ahead of him. He is the Bridegroom, and the bride belongs to him. I am the friend of the Bridegroom who stands nearby and listens with great joy to the Bridegroom's voice. And because of his words my joy is complete and overflows! (TPT)

I know that in the period of time in which the Bible was written that a Jewish man's family would choose a woman to be his wife in an arrangement that benefitted both families, and that the bride and groom frequently had little to no say in the matter. The young man's family would bring a proposal of marriage and a "bride price" along with other gifts to negotiate the betrothal. This betrothal was as binding as the marriage itself. Once agreed upon, he would then return to his father's house to make preparation for his bride by building a bridal chamber on to the family home. The process often took a year or more, and the bride did not know when the bridegroom would return for her. His return was usually announced by trumpets, and when the trumpets sounded, the bride had to be ready to go on short notice. When the bridegroom returned home with his bride, there was a wedding ceremony, and the man's family invited everyone they knew to the wedding feast. It was a time of great celebration and honor.

Jesus, you are my Bridegroom; my heavenly Father chose me (as well as all believers in you as Messiah) as your Bride and gave you as the ultimate gift to me. You paid the ultimate bride price by giving your life in return for mine; you took on the penalty for all sin and paid the price of a horrific death for me. But the betrothal does not stop there; before you died, you told your disciples that you must go to be with the Father, and that you were going to prepare a place for me. You were resurrected from the dead and indeed appeared to your disciples before returning to the Father. You told us that you would return for your bride, and that no one knows the day or time so we must be prepared and ready.

Jesus, as your bride, how am I preparing myself for you? Am I keeping myself pure and set apart for you, or am I having a love affair with the things of this world? Am I keeping you foremost in my mind, or am I allowing myself to be distracted by the things that are urgent, but not necessarily important? Am I telling others that I am betrothed to you and looking forward to my marriage with joy, or do I act ashamed to speak your name? Do I read your love letters to me, and know your voice better than any other, or are your words just nice but not important to me? Oh Lord, convict my heart in those areas in which my love has grown cold! I confess that I do not have the passion for you that I had at first – forgive me Lord! I repent for allowing other things and ideas to have greater space in my heart and mind than you do – Jesus, I must return to you as my First Love! Thank you for sending us the Holy Spirit as a deposit of your love for me and a foretaste of the relationship yet to come! Thank you for the price you paid for me!

RETURN TO YOUR FIRST LOVE

A 21-Day Journey of Exploration

Epilogue – The Ultimate Gift

It has been difficult to decide what should be included in this devotional. This last entry took on a different focus, but the Lord impressed it on my heart with so much emotion that I felt it was worthy of being included. I pray that this entry touches your heart the way it did mine.

Jesus, as I come to you this morning, you are speaking to me about the incredible price you paid not only for me, but all mankind. I recall watching the movie *The Passion of the Christ*; it received an “R” rating because of its graphic portrayal of the scourging you received and your crucifixion on a wooden cross. The graphic nature of the movie really brought home to me just how much you SUFFERED for me, and the AGONY that you experienced. It was overwhelming to experience to watch that before my eyes, and I have to truly admit, I did not allow it to pierce me to the core of my being because that would have been too painful. I allowed my heart to erect its walls of protection so that I could experience some of that, but not the full weight.

Lord, today I sense you are wanting me to get more in touch with that emotion. I need to spend some time here and realize the depth of your LOVE for me; to recognize that you could have told the Father that it was just too much for you to bear on behalf of mankind. In the garden of Gethsemane, you said “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42, NIV). As an obedient son, you submitted yourself to your Father’s will. The weight of this task on you causes you to literally sweat drops of blood as you prayed in the garden.

You faced betrayal by one who had spent 3 years time walking the roads with you, breaking bread with you, witnessing the miracles you did, and even drinking from the same cup as you. You also knew that you had been sent to die for the sins of all as a perfect, spotless lamb, the ultimate sacrifice for the sins of mankind. You told your disciples on at least 3 occasions that you would suffer, be rejected, killed, and after 3 days you would rise again (see <http://www.voiceofjesus.org/predictionsofdeath.html>). Yet they really did not “get it” until it actually came to pass.

I think of the scourging you received at the hands of the Roman guards; being tied and whipped like an animal with barbed whips that literally ripped your flesh to shreds and left deep gashes in your back. Having a crown of thorns shoved down upon your head until it also drew blood, and then being lashed to a huge wooden beam that you were to carry a half mile up to the hill overlooking Jerusalem called Golgotha where they were to execute you. There was so much loss of blood that you were unable to carry your own cross as the other prisoners did, so they grabbed Simon of Cyrene to carry it for you. People cursed you and spit on you on the journey and called you a false prophet.

RETURN TO YOUR FIRST LOVE

A 21-Day Journey of Exploration

Once there, they laid you on top of the huge 300 lb. cross itself and nailed your hands and feet to the cross with 6" stakes of metal. Oh, the agony you experienced as those stakes pierce through your flesh and entered the bones of your wrists and ankles! After that, they used ropes to pull the cross up to a vertical position, then DROPPED it into place in a hole dug in the ground. Execution on a cross was one of the most heinous forms of torture ever devised, and due to the position of the body, one had to literally push themselves up with their feet and pull up with their arms in order to be able to breathe. Death on a cross was reserved for criminals and aliens; it often took several days for a person to die, usually from dehydration and the fact that they eventually suffocated as they became more exhausted. But you had lost so much blood, your death came within 6 hours.

Yet, your compassion was still for us; you called out "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they do!" (Luke 23:34). After 6 hours of suffering, you cried out "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). Your prayers changed from My Father, to My God because you were experiencing the separation from your Father as you bore the weight and penalty of all the sins of mankind. Then you gave up your spirit and died.

Your body was removed to a tomb and sealed for 3 days; it is believed that during that time you literally experienced the agony of Hell and separation from your Father. But you were victorious over that and were raised again to life as you had told your disciples you would be.

Lord, there are so many directions I could go, but I sense you saying just stop and reflect on the price you paid for me. You willingly accepted your assignment from the Father and submitted yourself to purchase salvation for all of us. You bore the judgement for ALL sin; there was no more judgement to be poured out; you received the full measure of God's wrath against sin. You reconciled us to the Father by taking that judgement in our place, even though we deserved it and you did not. Father God loved us so much that he sent you as our sin offering; may we not receive this gift lightly or without truly realizing the true cost to you.

Jesus, as I return to my First Love, I thank you that you were willing to suffer for me! I thank you that you restored me to relationship with my heavenly Father, and that I can look forward to spending eternity in heaven with you and my heavenly Father. Impress upon my heart the full weight of the price you paid for me and all mankind. May I not take lightly the cost to you; it cost you everything. You are indeed the ultimate gift and expression of love!