

**McCabe United Methodist Church**  
**The Naked Gospel: Cheating on the Spirit (part 5)**  
**Romans 8:12-17 and John 14:15-21**  
**Pastor Ray Baker**  
**2-5-12**

Naked Gospel: Old Testament offers the law, legalism. The New Testament offers a new covenant of forgiveness and grace through the life death and resurrection of Christ.

God loves us as we are, but loves us too much to leave us that way.

Today we will talk about living with the Holy Spirit. When we try to live on our own we are cheating ourselves of all the Spirit has to offer.

Derek Redmond was a young British track athlete who became famous for setting a new record in the 400-meter race, at age 19. Unfortunately he was sidelined with an Achilles tendon injury and missed the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul. During his recovery he had five separate surgeries.

It was a long road back. He couldn't do it on his own. He leaned on his trainers, the medical staff, his family and his friends; and his dad played an inspirational part in his son's training. Offering encouragement and support at every turn.

Derek was ready for the 1992 Summer Olympic Games in Barcelona. Many people thought he was guaranteed a medal. The day of the semifinal race Jim Redmond wore a Nike hat that said: "Just do it;" and a t-shirt which read: "Have you hugged your foot today?"

There were 65,000 fans in the stadium that day. Each person was there to cheer for their country and their favorite athlete. The starter raised and fired the pistol. The races began in a staggered fashion, each person running in their own lane. The fans were shouting as they came out of the first corner. As they came into the back stretch you could see Derek was moving into the lead. The cameras were on the pack of racers. Everything was going beautifully.

But...a single TV camera was trained on Derek and it caught the image of him suddenly grabbing his right hamstring. He limped through a couple of more steps and then dropped to his knees as the other runners passed him by.

As the other racers crossed the finish line as a group of medical personnel reached Derek's side to offer their assistance. But he surprised them by pushing them aside. He wasn't going to be carried off the track on a stretcher. His face was filled with pain as he hopped on one foot, taking one step after another to continue the race.

Before long the tears were running down his face.

As he entered the last corner the cameras showed a man in a Nike hat and a funny t-shirt running onto the track. The security guards tried to stop him but he just pushed them aside and motioned toward Derek. After working his way past three different people who on the track, Derek's dad was at his side.

Later it was reported that his dad told Derek he didn't have to finish. He didn't have anything to prove. But Derek responded: "I don't want to be listed as: Did-Not-Finish." His dad responded: "Then let's do it together." So, with their arms around each other they "walked" the last 30 meters as 65,000 people cheered for a father and son crossed the finish line.

This story is a wonderful illustration of the power of the Holy Spirit. Like Derek's father, the Holy Spirit is always with us to offer encouragement, guidance, and to carry us through our most difficult experiences.

I have known many, many people who have felt the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. The majority of their stories are not spectacular. They are simply everyday moments when people felt a sense of calm or assurance that God was with them.

Some of the people feel the presence of the spirit because they are involved in daily conversations with God: while walking the dog, driving the car, tending the flowers, or during their work day. Other people have told me stories of being in need or in times of uncertainty and they felt a sense of peace come over them when they prayed.

Occasionally, people have experiences like a high school student who was attending a youth lock-in. He decided to slip away from the group and sit in the sanctuary to spend some time alone with God. After about ten minutes he suddenly felt a presence and imagined Jesus was in the room. He was filled with a sense of confidence that he wasn't alone.

I also know a story about a woman who had been involved in a series of meaningful devotional studies. Throughout these devotional times she felt closer and closer to God. One day she decided to lie on the couch after her devotional time. Suddenly she felt a sense of warmth come over her. Being a bit of a skeptic she opened one eye to see if the sun was shining through the window. But then she smiled and closed her eye assured she was in the presence of God.

The most common stories I've heard about the feeling that someone was in the presence of the Holy Spirit have been at the times when a loved one is dying. There are numerous stories about a loved one reaching out for someone who isn't there or reporting they can see Jesus standing at their bedside.

I believe that we all need the Holy Spirit as a part of our lives.

C.S. Lewis, in his book *Mere Christianity* wrote:

God designed the human machine to run on *himself*. He himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way without bothering about religion. God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from himself....

The Bible teaches us we belong to Jesus Christ, and his Spirit gives us life. This is good news for any of us who find ourselves limping toward a finish line.

When you are feeling alone, reach out to someone in need and you will feel the Holy Spirit's presence. When a family member is hurting, reach out to them and offer support and the Holy Spirit will give you the right words to say. When you receive difficult news from your doctor, share it with a friend and experience the Holy Spirit moving between you. When someone you know has felt rejected, offer them the gift of your presence and the Spirit will bring them comfort.

Our faith assures us with this good news; the Holy Spirit is now our Advocate no matter what misfortune comes our way, we need not worry. Our adversities might be personal or emotional, medical or vocational, but we can rest assured by the promise that we are not alone.

The Spirit of truth and life will carry us, comfort us, and guide us through anything life throws at us.