



*Clea Crisman*

I love the adventure of letting God live my life! It's not easy, not always painless, but so worth the investment. As I study how we develop spiritually, I am intrigued by the fact that the more mature we become spiritually, the more our spirituality is intertwined with our human selves. We become more whole, less divided human/spiritual beings.

I live in Wilsonville, Oregon, with my husband, Gordon, and we have five children and six grandchildren. I love growing things, deep discussions of things that matter, and having lots of surgery. No wait...that's just a hobby, and not even one I chose.

I hope you enjoy exploring a few aspects of our spirituality with me this week.

*BIBLE READING: Isaiah 6:1–7*

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin said, “You are not a human being in search of a spiritual experience. You are a spiritual being immersed in a human experience.” But what does it mean to be a spiritual person? Paul calls us citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20), temporary residents of this physical world. Will heaven be ours only after death? Scripture gives us hints into some ways we are spiritually connected to the kingdom of heaven. Here are a few:

- We are capable of spiritual communication. God’s Spirit speaks to us as a deep, spiritually experiential knowing, through Scripture, experiences, other people, dreams, and more. The Spirit guides, calls, and comforts us, and affirms us as God’s children (Romans 8:16).
- We are given powerful spiritual gifts, and the Holy Spirit produces spiritual fruit in us that become visible to others.
- We are connected to other believers in an intangible, spiritual bond as Christ’s body on earth.

Isaiah is one of many people who have glimpsed heaven. Read Isaiah 6 again, and imagine that this realm is invisibly present all around you (because maybe it is!). Join in singing the beautiful songs! Cry, “Holy! Holy! Holy!” before the majestic purity of God. Envision angels coming and going, serving God. The spiritual kingdom appears to be a beautiful and busy place, and it’s our home address!

How might we learn to live more fully into our spiritual selves, to realize that every moment is potentially sacramental as our spirits remain tuned to the Spirit of God?

*SONG: Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Sweet Spirit of God, tell me who I am in you. Show me your glory!*

—Cleta Crisman

*BIBLE READING: Colossians 3:1–4*

My father, Hubert Thornburg, died in 2013. Our family shared his last two days, coming and going, talking and laughing with Dad, and gathering around his bed to sing him home with his favorite hymns. He would drift in and out of consciousness as his breathing became sporadic, but often he would raise his arms toward the ceiling and his face would break into a glorious, ecstatic smile. Once, toward the end, my sister asked him if he was seeing Jesus, and he replied, “Yes! Jesus!” It felt like I was touching heaven too, and Dad was bringing the glory of the kingdom of heaven right into his room.

Later, while I struggled to cope with the huge hole in my heart, I was surprised by the biggest question in my mind: *Where is he now? He’s just gone—where did he go?!* Knowing he was with Jesus somewhere was suddenly not enough. I needed to have a sense of exactly where he was.

I finally complained to God that my father was in sort of a limbo-land in my mind, and God comforted me with these words: Your daddy is with me, and you are with me. When I look at each of you, I can see both of you at once; that is how close you are to each other in me. You are only a breath apart.

I understood that to be true because I am not just flesh but also spirit, and my spirit is born into citizenship in the very place where my daddy now lives. Amazing!

*SONG: When We All Get to Heaven*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, I cannot fathom the mysteries of the spiritual realm; help me to nurture the life I cannot yet see.*

—Cleta Crisman

*Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:14–21*

I was working alone in the church on a Saturday morning, sitting with my back to the door of my office, when suddenly I knew someone else was in the room; I turned and saw a homeless man standing right behind me. Though I had not heard him come into the church or even into my office, I had physically sensed his presence.

As spiritual beings, we have the capability of sensing spiritual things, including other spiritual beings, but it doesn't come automatically or even easily to most of us. Brother Lawrence's book, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, is a wonderful invitation to increase our awareness of God's Spirit with and in us. It's helpful to me to describe it as practicing *awareness* of the presence of God.

Maybe it would be a good idea to practice awareness of the spirit in others as well. In 2 Corinthians 5:16–17, Paul says we should no longer view one another from a human perspective, but as a new being, the newly reborn spirit that inhabits the physical bodies of believers. But that is so hard! When we have major disagreements, we don't understand someone else's weaknesses, or we are wronged by someone—it is hard to remember to see them with our spirit's eyes, as God sees.

When we "see" with our spirit's eyes through God's Spirit, everyone looks different because of the mercy, grace, and love that bind us together in Christ. It's like we are given God's love-colored glasses to see people as they truly are.

Is there someone you need to see through God's glasses?

*SONG: Open My Eyes*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Spirit of God, increase our awareness of you and help us see the new spirits of others and love them like you do.*

—Cleta Crisman

*BIBLE READING: Romans 12:1–8*

Paul says that all believers are given spiritual gifts by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of building up the body of Christ and furthering God's work. I remember some awkward times in a group trying to identify spiritual gifts in each other. Most of us weren't sure how to discern a spiritual gift from a natural talent, and we didn't realize that some spiritual gifts may not yet have been empowered in someone's life.

So what sets a spiritual gift apart from a natural talent? My sense is that what makes a gift spiritual is the heart of the person who demonstrates it and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to multiply its positive effects. A spiritual gift is often an empowered natural talent.

The spiritual gift that is exercised from a heart of love and surrender to Jesus Christ will produce spiritual results, and that gift, when empowered by the Holy Spirit, will inexplicably multiply spiritual results well beyond what a natural human talent could do. We may have latent gifts, waiting for our hearts to be surrendered in order for the empowerment to happen. And sometimes the Spirit gifts us temporarily for a certain situation. It's dangerous to find our identity in our gift or take ownership of it. The ministry, the power, and the purpose remain solely God's.

Can you think of times when you were spiritually stirred and inspired by an empowered sermon, a song, an act of service, a teaching, a prophetic word? Times when your spirit recognized and resonated with the Spirit in that act or gift? It's the perfect time to affirm someone's spiritual gift!

*SONG: Take My Life, and Let It Be*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Spirit, prepare me to be a powerful instrument of your love and goodness.*

—Cleta Crisman

*BIBLE READING: Galatians 5:22–23*

When I was in college, my small group decided to study the fruits of the Spirit so that we could, by sheer force of will, transform ourselves into people who demonstrated these qualities. A noble effort, but we were working from the outside in, trying to do the indwelling Holy Spirit's work.

I grew up with fruit trees all around me. We knew what would cause the trees to bear fruit: water, good soil, sunshine, space to grow, and protection from unhealthy growth, parasites, and diseases. If we had taken the same approach as my college friends and I did, we would have worked hard to form the leaves and branches into fruit.

The key word is fruit—meaning something that naturally results when the conditions are right: the fruit tree uses its roots, trunk, and branches to draw water and nutrients from the soil, and its leaves make chlorophyll from the sun. For the Spirit to bear fruit in us, we must draw from the bottomless well of God's love and grace and power, and bask in the light of God's presence. Then the Spirit produces Christ's qualities in us, and we begin to look more and more like Christ from the inside out, often without effort or even awareness. That is spiritual fruit.

Years ago I put a basket of fake apples on my coffee table, and one of them has tiny bite marks where my great (and I do mean great!) niece Elsie tried to eat it. The fruit we fake can look pretty tasty until someone takes a bite.

*SONG: Make Me Like You (Heritage Singers)*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Spirit, help me to remember that you produce the fruit as I grow deep roots into you.*

—Cleta Crisman

*BIBLE READING: John 17:20–23*

I've been pondering what Jesus had in mind when he prayed for unity among believers (John 17:20–23). He's speaking of a spiritual unity that flows from personal oneness with God and is the driving force of our attitudes and behavior in regard to other believers. But what does it look like? It can't be complete unanimity of thought and opinion—that would inhibit growth and be boring—but unanimity about both the authority of Christ and about our dependence upon the Spirit to guide us. And humble permission to be made one with *every* believer.

When we come together in silent, listening worship, we are there for Christ to serve himself to us, whether or not we use physical symbols. Christ wants to unite us into one body, even with our many differences (1 Corinthians 12:12–27). All who genuinely seek to know and follow Jesus are to be *his* body in this world, ministering together in complementary dependence upon Jesus. Maybe that's why Jesus said when we come to worship, we must be free from unresolved offenses with another believer, truly forgiving those who have offended us, or else Jesus' dream of oneness cannot happen (Matthew 5:23–24).

When believers criticize and judge other believers, it surely shatters the heart of God. Our lives (and opinions) must be surrendered to God, allowing his Spirit to empower our gifts, produce the fruit of Christ-likeness, and reveal to us the true spirit of others, preparing us to be made spiritually one in Christ.

*SONG: They'll Know We Are Christians*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Jesus, I need help. Make me an instrument of unity within your body, accepting each person as a precious brother or sister.*

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