THE DAILY BREAD

The Creed of the Apostles



Keeping in Step with the Spirit

A FORMATION BOOK BY

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The Everyday Apostle

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Keeping in Step

A Practical Life in the Holy Spirit

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INTRODUCTION

Walking in Rhythm

There is a short line of Saint Paul that holds the whole of the practical Christian life in a single image. If we live by the Spirit, he writes, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. The picture is of two walking together, matched in pace and direction, moving as one. It is the picture of soldiers marching in step, or of a man walking so closely with a companion that their strides fall together without either having to think about it. That, Paul says, is how a Christian is meant to live: not merely possessing the Holy Spirit, but walking in rhythm with him, step for step, through the ordinary hours of a day.

The trouble is that most Christians are out of step. They have received the Holy Spirit, truly and fully, and then proceed to walk through their lives at their own pace, in their own direction, consulting him rarely and following him less, like a man marching to his own beat beside a companion he has forgotten is there. They are not without the Spirit; they are simply not keeping step with him. And the result is a Christian life lived almost entirely on human strength, which is exactly as exhausting and as limited as it sounds. The whole difference between a striving, depleted faith and a living, powerful one often comes down to this one thing: whether a man has learned to keep in step with the Spirit he already has.

If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. — Galatians 5:25

This book is about the practice of that walking, the concrete, daily business of keeping in step. It takes for granted the great truths about who the Holy Spirit is, that he is God, the Third Person of the Trinity, given to every baptized and confirmed soul. But it presses past those truths to the question a man actually has to answer every morning: how do I live, today, in a way that keeps me in step with him? We will look at the Spirit a man already has and so often ignores, at learning to recognize his quiet voice, at the discipline of becoming easy to lead, at the shape of a Spirit-led day, at how to tell his promptings from the many other voices within, and at the fruit and the power that a life in step with him produces. The aim is not more knowledge about the Spirit, but a man who actually walks with him, in rhythm, day by day.

CHAPTER ONE

The Spirit You Already Have

From Possessing to Cooperating

The first thing to settle is that this is not about getting more of the Holy Spirit. If you are baptized and confirmed, you have the Holy Spirit, fully and personally, dwelling in your soul. The entire fullness of God the Holy Spirit lives in you right now. The Christian life is therefore never a matter of acquiring a Spirit you lack, but of cooperating with the Spirit you already have, and the gap between the two kinds of Christian, the dry and the alive, is almost never a gap in how much of the Spirit they possess. It is a gap in how fully they cooperate with him.

Fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you. — 2 Timothy 1:6

The Gift Lying Dormant

Picture two men who received exactly the same sacraments, the same Baptism, the same Confirmation, the same indwelling Spirit. One of them has spent his life ignoring the Guest in his soul, never consulting him, never deliberately yielding to him, running his Christian life on his own willpower and wondering why it feels so lifeless. The other has learned to turn to the Spirit constantly, to ask his help, to follow his lead, to draw on his power. Both have the same Spirit. But in one the gift lies dormant, banked down like coals under ash, while in the other it blazes. Paul's counsel to fan the gift into flame assumes exactly this: that a man can possess the Spirit and yet let him lie low, and that the remedy is not to get a new gift but to stir up the one already given, to blow on the coals until they catch.

It is worth sitting with how ordinary the first man is, because he is not a bad man and not an unbeliever. He goes to Mass. He would tell you, correctly, that he has the Holy Spirit. He simply never thinks about it, never acts on it, lives for all practical purposes as though the Spirit were a doctrine to be affirmed rather than a Person to be consulted. This is the condition of a great many sincere Christians, and it explains the strange gap between what they believe and how they live: they possess infinite resources and draw on almost none of them. The remedy begins the moment a man stops treating the indwelling Spirit as a settled fact in the background of his theology and starts treating him as a living Presence to be reckoned with in the foreground of his day.

Having Is Not the Same as Yielding

The crucial distinction, then, is between having the Spirit and yielding to him, and a man must grasp that the first does not automatically produce the second. The Spirit does not override a man; he leads, and leading can be followed or ignored. He is a perfect gentleman, as the old saying has it, who does not force his way but waits to be welcomed,

prompts without compelling, and will not drag a man where the man refuses to go. This means that the initiative in possessing the Spirit was entirely God's, given freely in the sacraments, but the initiative in cooperating with him is, in a real sense, the man's. God has done his part; the Spirit is given and present. What remains is for a man to stop ignoring him and start walking with him, and no amount of further grace will do that one thing for a man that he must do himself: turn, and yield, and follow.

Blow on the Coals

The practical upshot is hopeful and immediate. A man does not have to wait for some dramatic second blessing, some special experience, before he can live a powerful life in the Spirit. He has everything he needs already; the fire is laid, the coals are there. He has only to blow on them, which is to say, to begin deliberately cooperating with the Spirit he already has: to invoke him, to ask his help, to listen for his lead, to follow his promptings, to draw on his strength rather than his own. The dormant gift becomes a living flame not by acquisition but by use, and it can begin today. A man who has felt his faith grow cold and lifeless should hear this as the good news it is: the fire did not go out. It was only banked low. Blow on the coals, and it will blaze again.

CHAPTER TWO

Learning His Voice

Recognizing the Spirit at Work

To keep in step with someone, a man has to be able to sense which way he is moving, and to walk with the Spirit a man must learn to recognize his promptings. This is the first practical skill of the Spirit-led life, and it is learned, the way a man learns to recognize the voice of a friend on the phone before he gives his name. The Spirit has, so to speak, a characteristic voice and manner, and a man can come to know it, but only if he understands first where and how the Spirit tends to speak.

And after the fire a still small voice. — 1 Kings 19:12

He Speaks in a Whisper

The great lesson of the prophet Elijah on the mountain is that God was not in the dramatic phenomena, the mighty wind, the earthquake, the fire, but in what came after them: a still small voice, a low whisper, a sound of sheer silence. This is how the Holy Spirit most often leads. Not usually in spectacular experiences or unmistakable signs,

which a man might wish for, but in a quiet interior prompting, easily missed and easily dismissed, that comes gently and does not shout. Men who expect the Spirit to move them only through dramatic events spend their lives missing him, because he is almost always speaking in the whisper, beneath the noise. A man who would learn the Spirit's voice must first lower his expectation of fireworks and raise his attention to the quiet, for that is where the leading nearly always comes.

There is a reason God works this way, and it is not stinginess. A voice that shouted and overwhelmed would compel rather than invite, and the Spirit means to lead free men, not to override them. The whisper requires a man to lean in, to pay attention, to want to hear; it asks something of him, and in asking it forms him. A relationship conducted entirely in thunderclaps would make no demand on a man's attentiveness and would leave his heart untrained. So the Spirit speaks softly, and the very softness is part of the gift, because learning to hear it is learning to love the One who speaks. The man who complains that God never speaks to him dramatically has often simply never grown quiet enough to hear how constantly God speaks to him gently.

Where the Promptings Come

The Spirit's whisper reaches a man through several ordinary channels, and knowing them helps a man notice what he would otherwise overlook. It comes through Scripture, when a line a man has read a hundred times suddenly stands up off the page and speaks directly to his situation. It comes through the conscience, in the quiet conviction that something must change or must be done. It comes as the gentle nudge toward a good a man had not planned, the prompting to make the call, to offer the help, to speak the word, to turn away from the temptation. And it comes as a certain peace that settles over a right decision, or a persistent unease that will not leave a wrong one alone. None of these announces itself as the Holy Spirit; each simply arises, quietly, within. A man learns to recognize them as the Spirit's leading by attention and over time, the way he learns any voice, until what once seemed like random inner impulses are revealed as the steady leading of a Person who has been walking beside him all along.

Telling His Voice From the Noise

The first and most reliable mark of the Spirit's voice is that it never contradicts what God has already revealed. The Holy Spirit is the author of the Scriptures and the guide of the Church, and he does not say one thing in a man's heart and the opposite in his written word; a prompting that pulls a man away from the clear teaching of the faith, however spiritual or liberating it feels, is not from the Spirit, whatever else it may be. Within that boundary, the Spirit's leading tends to carry a distinctive quality: a deep peace, even

when it calls a man to something hard, and a movement outward, toward God and toward the good of others. The voices that compete with him, a man's own appetites, his fears, the suggestions of the enemy, tend to carry a different signature: agitation, a turning inward on the self, a peace that is really just the quieting of conscience. Learning to feel this difference is the beginning of real discernment, and the rest of this book will return to it, because a man who cannot tell the Spirit's voice from the others cannot keep in step with him.

CHAPTER THREE

The Discipline of Docility

Becoming Easy to Lead

There is an old and unfashionable word for the virtue at the heart of the Spirit-led life: docility. It does not mean weakness or spinelessness, as the modern ear assumes. It comes from the Latin for teachable, and it names the quality of a man who is easy to lead, responsive to the Spirit's touch, quick to follow where he is guided. Docility is the single disposition most necessary for keeping in step, and it is the opposite of the stubborn self-direction that is the default of every strong-willed man.

Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious. — Isaiah 50:4-5

Docility Is Strength Under Direction

It is worth clearing away the misunderstanding at once, because capable men resist docility as if it were a surrender of their competence. It is nothing of the kind. A powerful horse, superbly responsive to the lightest touch of its rider, is not weak; it is strength made useful by responsiveness, and a horse that will not be guided, however strong, is merely dangerous and good for nothing. Docility to the Spirit is exactly this: a man's full strength made responsive to God's lead, so that all his considerable power is actually pointed where it will do good. The undocile man, the one who will be led by no one and insists on directing himself in everything, is not stronger for his stubbornness; he is merely a strong man going the wrong way under his own steam. The saints were the most docile of men and the most powerful, precisely because their strength was wholly available to the Spirit who could aim it.

The Daily Yes

Docility is built by a repeated act of surrender, a daily yes to the Spirit's leading before the day's particular promptings even arrive. A man who begins each day by deliberately handing it over, saying in effect, Holy Spirit, lead me today and I will follow, has set himself in a posture of docility that shapes everything after. This is the deeper meaning of the morning offering, which most men say by rote if they say it at all: it is the daily renewing of a man's willingness to be led. The yes must be renewed because the self-will it counters is renewed every morning too, creeping back in overnight, reasserting its claim to run the day. A man who makes this deliberate surrender at the start of each day finds himself far more responsive to the Spirit through it, because he has already decided, in advance, the question that every prompting raises: will I follow? He answered it at dawn. Yes.

Obey the Small Promptings

Docility grows or withers by what a man does with the small promptings, and this is intensely practical. When the Spirit nudges a man toward some small good, to say the kind word, to make the apology, to resist the complaint, to turn off the screen and pray, the man either acts on it or ignores it, and each choice trains him. Acting on the small promptings makes a man more sensitive to the next one, as a muscle used grows stronger; ignoring them makes him progressively deafer, as a nudge repeatedly refused eventually stops coming. Many a man has dulled himself to the Spirit not by any grave rebellion but by the steady habit of noticing the gentle promptings and declining to act, until he no longer notices them at all. The way to keep the channel open is simply to obey the small things, promptly, even when they are inconvenient or seem to matter little. Fidelity in the small promptings is the whole training ground of docility.

This is why a man should be suspicious of his own instinct to wait for the big leading before he bothers to follow. There is no school of obedience other than the small matters; a man who will not follow the Spirit in turning off a screen or holding his tongue will certainly not follow him in the costly things, because he will not have the trained responsiveness that costly obedience requires. The great acts of docility that the saints are remembered for were built, every one of them, on ten thousand forgotten small ones. A man becomes able to make the hard surrender later only by making the easy ones now, and the promptings he is tempted to dismiss as too trivial to matter are in fact the exact material from which a Spirit-led life is made.

Make Room: Silence

None of this is possible for a man whose life is a wall of noise, and here the modern man faces a particular obstacle. The Spirit speaks in a whisper, and a whisper cannot be heard

over the constant roar of input that fills a contemporary life: the screens, the feeds, the music, the chatter, the restless reaching for the phone in every empty moment. A man who never tolerates a moment of silence has, in effect, arranged his life so that he cannot hear the one Voice he most needs. Docility therefore requires the deliberate cultivation of silence, pockets of quiet built into the day in which a man is available to be led: a few minutes of stillness in the morning, a commute with the radio off, an evening free of the glowing screen, time before the Lord with nothing playing. A man must make room to hear, and in a noisy age that room has to be fought for and guarded. But without it, all the willingness in the world will not help a man keep step with a Voice he has made it impossible to hear.

CHAPTER FOUR

Walking in Step, Day by Day

The Shape of a Spirit-Led Day

Keeping in step with the Spirit is not an abstraction; it has a concrete daily shape, a rhythm a man can actually build into the ordinary hours of his life. The Spirit-led life is not reserved for mystics in monasteries; it is available to a man with a job, a family, and a full calendar, and it is lived not in dramatic experiences but in a handful of simple practices woven through a normal day. Here is what keeping in step actually looks like from morning to night.

Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. — Galatians 5:16

Begin by Invoking Him

The day begins by calling on the Spirit, deliberately, before it gets away. The ancient prayer, Come, Holy Spirit, prayed with meaning on waking, does what it says: it consciously invites the Spirit to lead the day about to unfold and sets a man, from the first moment, in the posture of one who intends to walk with him. A man can extend this through the day by invoking the Spirit at its thresholds, in the moments before a hard conversation, a difficult meeting, a decision, a temptation, breathing a quick Come, Holy Spirit and so drawing on his help exactly where it is needed. These small invocations, scattered through a day, are the practical substance of walking by the Spirit. They turn a man from one who faces his day alone and consults God only in emergencies into one who takes each thing up with the Spirit at his side.

Act in His Power, Not Your Own

The heart of a Spirit-led day is a quiet, constant reliance on the Spirit's power rather than a man's own. Most men meet the demands of their day, the patience their family needs, the integrity their work requires, the temptations they face, out of their own natural resources, and those resources run out, usually by evening. Keeping in step means drawing instead, moment by moment, on the strength of the Spirit within. When a man feels his patience failing, instead of white-knuckling it he turns inwardly to the Spirit and asks for his patience; when courage is needed and his own is thin, he draws on the Spirit's fortitude; when he does not know what to say, he asks the Spirit for the words. This is not passivity; the man still acts, still exerts himself. But he acts in conscious dependence on a power greater than his own, and discovers that he can do, in the Spirit's strength, what he could never sustain on his own, and without the depletion that comes of running a Christian life on an empty human tank.

Men resist this because it feels like weakness, and a capable man prides himself on handling his own load. But there is a difference between the strength that refuses help and the strength that knows where real power lies and draws on it. The second is the greater strength, and it is the strength of the saints, who were not feeble men leaning on God because they could do nothing themselves, but formidable men who had learned that their own considerable resources were nothing beside the power available to them, and who therefore drew on that power constantly and did far more than their natural gifts could ever have accounted for. To rely on the Spirit is not to do less; it is to do, in his strength, incomparably more than a man could do in his own, and to be able to keep doing it when his own strength would long since have given out.

Review the Day With Him

The day closes by looking back over it with the Spirit, and this brief practice may be the single most powerful habit for a man learning to keep in step. For a few minutes before sleep, a man reviews the hours in the Spirit's presence, asking two questions: where did the Spirit lead me today, and did I follow? He notices the promptings he obeyed and the ones he ignored, the moments he walked in step and the moments he marched off on his own. This nightly review does what nothing else can: it trains a man's perception, so that over weeks he becomes far more aware, in the moment, of the Spirit's leading he used to miss entirely. A man cannot learn to keep in step without, in some fashion, checking his step, and this gentle examination each night, free of both complacency and anxious scrupulosity, is how a man gradually learns the Spirit's rhythm until walking in it becomes, more and more, his second nature.

CHAPTER FIVE

Testing the Spirits

Discernment in Practice

Not every inner voice is the Holy Spirit, and a man who assumes that every strong feeling, every impulse, every compelling thought is the Spirit's leading will be led badly astray. The interior life is a crowded place, and the promptings a man feels arise from several sources: the Holy Spirit, yes, but also his own desires and fears, and the suggestions of the enemy, who is perfectly willing to dress a temptation as an inspiration. So a man must learn to test the spirits, to discern which inner movements are from God and which are not, and this is among the most practical and necessary skills of the whole spiritual life.

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. — 1 John 4:1

Why the Testing Is Needed

The need for discernment is obvious the moment a man considers how much evil has been done by people sincerely convinced they were following God. The impulse that feels most urgent and most spiritual is not therefore from the Spirit; feelings are not self-authenticating, and the enemy's most effective work is often done not through obvious temptation to sin but through good things subtly disordered, a genuine zeal twisted toward harshness, a real desire for good turned into a justification for pride or neglect of duty. A man guided by raw feeling, however religious the feeling, is a man easily deceived. The Church has centuries of hard-won wisdom here, and a serious man avails himself of it rather than trusting his own untested impulses, however compelling they seem in the moment.

The Tests a Man Can Apply

The discernment has clear and usable tests. The first, already named, is truth: does this prompting align with Scripture and the teaching of the Church, or bend away from them? Anything that contradicts what God has revealed is ruled out at once. The second test is the fruit and the direction: where does this movement lead, and what does it leave behind? The Spirit's leading, even when it calls a man to something difficult, tends to produce and be accompanied by a deep peace, and to draw a man outward toward God and the genuine good of others. The promptings that come from the flesh or the enemy, even when they wear a spiritual costume, tend to leave agitation, a restless anxiety, a curving back in on the self, a subtle feeding of pride or appetite. A man learns to ask of a

strong inner pull: does this draw me toward God and neighbor, in peace, or toward myself, in disturbance? The honest answer is usually clear, and it is usually right.

A third test deserves naming because the enemy exploits its absence: the test of time and patience. The Spirit, who is never in a panic, rarely drives a man to act this instant, before he can pray, before he can think, before he can consult. A prompting that insists it must be obeyed right now, that cannot bear a day's delay or a word of counsel, that grows angry at being tested, should be held at arm's length precisely because of its urgency, for that pressing quality is far more typical of the flesh and the enemy than of God. A true leading from the Spirit will ordinarily survive a pause, a prayer, and an honest examination; indeed it will usually grow clearer and steadier under them. When in doubt, a man can almost always afford to wait and test, and the impulse that forbids him to is, for that very reason, suspect.

Consolation, Desolation, and Counsel

The spiritual masters give a further practical rule worth a man's knowing. There are seasons of consolation, when a man feels close to God, prayer is sweet, and the good is easy, and seasons of desolation, when God feels distant, prayer is dry, and the man is pulled toward discouragement. The rule is this: do not make major changes or decisions in desolation. In the dark seasons a man should hold his ground, keep his commitments, and wait, trusting that the desolation will pass, rather than acting on the discouraged impulses that arise in it, for those impulses rarely come from God. Save the big discernments for seasons of peace. And in any matter of real weight, a man should not trust his own discernment alone but bring it to a wise and holy guide, a good confessor or spiritual director, for the enemy's power lies largely in secrecy, and a prompting brought into the light of honest counsel is quickly seen for what it is. The humblest and safest course in discernment is never to walk it entirely alone.

CHAPTER SIX

The Evidence of a Life in Step

Bearing the Fruit

How does a man know whether he is actually keeping in step with the Spirit, as opposed to merely telling himself he is? The answer is not in his feelings, which can deceive, nor in his experiences, which can be counterfeited, but in his fruit, in what his life is actually producing over time. A life genuinely in step with the Spirit bears a particular and

recognizable harvest, and the presence or absence of that fruit is the truest evidence of whether a man is walking with the Spirit or merely talking about him.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. — Ephesians 4:30

Fruit, Not Feelings

The evidence of the Spirit's work is character, not emotion. A man may feel full of spiritual fervor and be no closer to God, or feel dry and barren while quietly becoming a saint. What tells the truth is the slow change in what a man actually is: whether he is growing, over months and years, in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These are the fruit the Spirit produces in a man who keeps in step with him, and they are not feelings but settled dispositions, visible in how a man actually treats the people around him under pressure. A man honestly wanting to know whether he is walking with the Spirit should not consult his religious feelings but ask the harder question: am I becoming, in fact, more patient, more kind, more honest, more free than I was a year ago? The answer is the real measure of his life in the Spirit.

The Fruit Grows as You Keep in Step

The encouraging truth is that the fruit grows precisely as a man keeps in step, and it grows the way fruit grows, organically and from within, not by frantic effort. A man does not produce patience by straining at it; he bears it as the natural result of walking closely with the Spirit who is patience itself. This is why the whole emphasis of the Spirit-led life falls on the walking, the keeping in step, the daily cooperation, rather than on a direct assault against one's faults. Tend the relationship, keep in step day by day, and the fruit comes on its own, in its season. A man who despairs of ever being patient or gentle or free should take heart: he is not asked to manufacture these things by willpower. He is asked only to keep in step with the Spirit, and to let the Spirit grow them in him, which the Spirit reliably does in a soul that walks with him.

When the Fruit Is Missing

And when the fruit is thin or missing, as every honest man finds it is in seasons, the diagnosis is usually simple: a man has fallen out of step. Paul warns that the Spirit can be grieved and that his fire can be quenched, and both happen not usually through dramatic rebellion but through the quiet accumulation of ignored promptings, cherished small sins, and the neglect of the practices that keep a man close to him. The remedy is equally simple, if not always easy: get back in step. Return to the daily invocation, the obedience

to the small promptings, the silence, the nightly review, and above all to the sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist, which restore and feed the life of the Spirit in the soul. A man does not need to despair when he finds the fruit gone; he needs to notice that he has drifted out of rhythm, and to fall back into step. The Spirit has not left. He is still there, still ready to lead the moment a man turns back to follow.

It helps to know that the drifting is almost never a single decisive step away; it is a slow accumulation of small turnings, each one too minor to alarm a man at the time. A prompting ignored here, a compromise permitted there, a practice quietly dropped because the week was busy, and none of it feels like leaving the Spirit, yet the sum of it is a man who has marched well out of step without ever deciding to. This is good news, because what drifted gradually can be recovered deliberately, and the recovery does not require some dramatic reconversion, only the honest resumption of the ordinary means. A man gets back in step the same way he fell out of it, one small turning at a time, except that now the turnings are back toward the Spirit, and the first of them can be made today.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Power for the Sending

The Spirit and the Mission

The man who has learned to keep in step with the Spirit has become, without perhaps realizing it, exactly the man the mission requires, for the Spirit a man walks with is the same Spirit who turns ordinary believers into witnesses. The whole practice of the Spirit-led life is also, from another angle, preparation for being sent, because the power to carry the mission is not a man's own but the Spirit's, and only a man who has learned to draw on that power is ready to be sent at all.

And when they had prayed… they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. — Acts 4:31

Boldness Not Your Own

When the first Christians faced a hostile world and needed courage beyond their own, they did not work themselves up to it; they prayed, and were filled with the Spirit, and spoke with a boldness that was given, not manufactured. This is the pattern for every man who will be asked to witness to Christ in an indifferent or hostile setting, which is to say every Christian man. The courage to speak of the faith when it is costly, to stand for the truth when it is unpopular, to represent Christ at work and among skeptical friends,

is not finally a matter of a man's natural temperament, bold or timid as he may be by nature. It is a grace, the Spirit's own boldness, available to the man who asks for it and draws on it. A naturally timid man who has learned to keep in step with the Spirit can be given a courage that astonishes him, while a naturally bold man who relies on his own nerve will eventually meet the situation that breaks it. The boldness the mission requires is the Spirit's to give.

Notice that the boldness came after they prayed, and that it came as the Spirit filled them, not as they summoned their nerve. The order matters, because it locates the courage where a man can actually find it. A man preparing to witness in a hard setting does not have to manufacture a confidence he does not feel; he has to pray, and ask, and draw on the Spirit, and then speak, trusting that what he needs will be given in the speaking rather than stockpiled in advance. This is why even a fearful man can be an apostle. He is not asked to stop being fearful by nature; he is asked to keep in step with the Spirit, who supplies the boldness in the moment it is needed, and often only in that moment, so that the man discovers his courage in the act of obedience rather than before it.

Keeping in Step Into the Mission

So the practice does not change when a man moves from his private formation into active mission; it deepens and extends. The same keeping in step that governs his ordinary day now governs his witness: he invokes the Spirit before the conversation, listens for the prompting about when to speak and when to stay silent, relies on the Spirit's power rather than his own persuasiveness, and trusts the Spirit to do the one thing a man never can, which is to actually open another heart. A man who has learned to walk in step with the Spirit in the small matters of his own life is ready to walk in step with him into the great matter of other souls, because it is the identical skill, applied on a larger field. The Spirit who led him faithfully through his ordinary days will lead him just as faithfully in the mission, if he keeps in step. The sending, when it comes, is simply the walk continued, out into the world.

CONCLUSION

In Step, to the End

Return to the image Paul gave, of two walking together in matched rhythm. That is the whole of the practical Christian life, reduced to a single picture: a man and the Holy Spirit, walking in step, through the ordinary hours of an ordinary life, day after day, to the end. Not a man striving alone on his own strength, nor a man waiting for dramatic

experiences, but a man who has learned the quiet, daily art of walking in rhythm with the Spirit he already has.

You have seen what that walking actually requires, and how little of it is extraordinary. It is the stirring up of a gift already given, the learning of a quiet voice, the daily yes of a docile heart, the obedience to small promptings, the pockets of silence in which he can be heard, the invoking of him through the day, the drawing on his power rather than one's own, the nightly review of one's steps, the testing of the spirits, and the humble return to step whenever a man finds he has drifted out of it. None of these is beyond an ordinary man with an ordinary life. All of them together are simply what it means, in practice, to keep in step with the Spirit.

Begin, then, where you are, with the Spirit you already have, and start to walk. Invoke him tomorrow morning, follow the first small prompting he gives, and build the rhythm from there, one day at a time. The fruit will grow, the power will come, and slowly the walking in step will become less an effort and more a second nature, until a man can hardly remember how he once marched through his days alone. And the man who has learned to keep in step with the Spirit is ready for anything the mission asks, because he has learned to draw on a strength that is not his own and will not run out. Keep in step with the Spirit. Do it today, and tomorrow, and to the end, and he will carry you the whole way home.

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