



05OurRuleofLife

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0:00:52.9 S2: It's the Bible Study Evangelista Show. And I'm Sonja Corbitt, your Catholic evangelista in our Holy Spirit series, When God Breathes. This is Episode 5, The Holy Spirit, Our Rule of Life. The Catholic encyclopedia says that the word "rule" from the Latin "regula," or the Greek "canon" means a standard by which something can be tested. So the canon of scripture is the rule, the books that were included in our Bible of holy Scripture, the books that were included and excluded, that was part of the canon. And the word rule then means something external to our faith that serves as its norm or its measure. And the encyclopedia goes on to say that since faith is divine and infallible, the rule of faith must also be divine and infallible. And since faith is supernatural ascent to divine truths on divine authority, the ultimate rule of faith must be God himself and his revelation of himself. And so we're talking about the Holy Spirit as our rule of life. Religious orders have rules of faith. The rule of St. Benedict or the rule of St. Basil, those rules for a monastery, there are a set of rules that govern the life of the monks and the nuns in a monastery or a convent.

0:02:17.7 S2: And the rule prescribes times for things like common prayer and meditative reading, manual work, as well as the details of common living like clothing and sleeping arrangements and food and drink and care of the sick and reception of guests, recruitment of new members, journeys away from the monastery or the convent, etcetera. So a rule then allows the Abbott or the Mother Superior to determine the particulars of common living according to his or her discretion. So for instance, the main theme of the Benedictine rule is obedience to the Abbott, and a couple of the others are: A, an emphasis on hospitality. And the rule emphasizes a balance of prayer and work and study and leisure, the divine office as their work, vows of stability and conversion and obedience among other things. But my point here is the rule of life. What is the rule of life for a regular Catholic or a regular Christian? And that's pretty much what we're gonna talk about today. Jesus tells us, as we've been looking at John 14, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments and I will pray to the Father and he will give you another counselor, intercessor, consoler, helper to

be with you forever, even the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him.

0:03:48.9 S2: You know him for he dwells in you and will be in you. I will not leave you desolate. I will come to you. The helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name will teach you all things and will remind you of everything that I have said." Now, a few words about this passage. We've covered quite a bit of it. We've covered the love of Christ that causes us to keep His commandments. We are in a relationship of love with Jesus and the Holy Spirit brings us a new presence of Jesus now that Jesus has resurrected and ascended into heaven. We looked at obedience. That love relationship will empower us to keep the commandments. We know that we can't even keep the commandments. Right? We have to be Edel. [chuckle] And so by remaining Edel, we position ourselves for the movement and the action and the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We looked at what counselor or advocate means, the helper, the Holy Spirit and we know that he will be with us forever, St. John Chrysostom said, even beyond death. And so now we're gonna look at the spirit of truth which we did a little bit yesterday, but I wanna concentrate first in this first segment on, "My name."

0:05:24.3 S2: Jesus says that the Father will send the Holy Spirit in my name. What does that mean? That means according to Jesus' person and teaching. So again, the Holy Spirit is not a substitute for Jesus, he's bringing us a new presence of Jesus. He teaches us all things that Jesus taught and he reminds us of those things. Now Jesus is speaking contextually in this passage. Jesus is speaking to the disciples, but it's true that he's also speaking to us. The Holy Spirit will teach us all things, all the things that Jesus taught. It is better to have the Holy Spirit than it is to have Jesus beside us because the Holy Spirit is in us and he will teach us all the things that Jesus taught and still teaches and will remind us of those things that we know that Jesus taught from the scriptures.

0:06:21.5 S2: And so he teaches, he reminds, he is the spirit of truth that tells us that the apostles are guarded in the truth and therefore the church is also guarded in the truth. And by extension, each of us Christians is guarded in the spirit of truth from error. And the Catholic encyclopedia, remember, tells us that the rule of life for us is God himself, divine authority and divine revelation. Remember that the Holy Spirit is the creator spirit, the incarnation spirit, the resurrection spirit. And he is the revealing spirit. He is the revealing power, he reveals and yet he himself is not revealed. He remains mysterious. Jesus is revealed to us as the person of God, but the Holy Spirit is not revealed, he's like the wind. We can see his effects, but not him, not the person of the Holy Spirit. So, what are the effects?

0:07:28.1 S2: We looked at some of that last week, the things that only the Holy Spirit can do. So how does he reveal himself? Well, the encyclopedia goes on to say a few things. The first is, he reveals himself in scripture, all scripture is God breathed. Remember that the word "spirit," "pneuma" in Greek means breath. So the Spirit breathes scripture. And scripture is God breathed and used for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the servant of God, you and I may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. That's 2nd Timothy 3:16 and 17. That's St. Paul speaking about the scriptures as being God breathed through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit breathed through and in, and with the natural abilities of the apostles in writing the gospels and the letters and the books of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Now, when Paul is speaking about scripture, he's talking about the Old Testament because they didn't have a New Testament yet. The apostles were writing those gospels and the letters that were inspired by the Holy Spirit and guarded by the Holy Spirit and chosen by the Holy Spirit to be included in what we

now call the Bible which includes the Old Testament and the New Testament for us.

0:08:55.9 S2: And so in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit as revealer revealed God through this big church word called a 'theophany', a revelation of God that would include the pillar of cloud and fire, the burning bush, the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, the fire fall on the altar of sacrifice. All of those would be considered theophanies or revelations of God. And the Book of Hebrews in chapter one says, in the Old Testament, previously, God revealed himself through the prophets. But now, he has spoken to us through a son. And so an example in the New Testament of what we could call a theophany would be Jesus himself in his person. And then when he resurrected and ascended, after the ascension, we have this theophany of the flames that rested on the heads of the apostles in the upper room at the descent of the Holy Spirit.

0:10:00.0 S2: We have this epiphany that happened to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. We have Paul who had this encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. All of these would be types of theophany. Again, back to the Catholic encyclopedia, it says, "But since divine revelation is contained in the written books and unwritten traditions, the Bible and divine tradition must be the rule of our faith. Since, however, these are only silent witnesses and cannot interpret themselves, they are commonly termed proximate but inanimate rules of faith. Unless then the Bible and tradition are to be profitless, we must look for some proximate rule which shall be animate or living."

0:10:47.6 S2: So, a living rule. The scriptures and oral tradition make up the deposit of faith. They are our rule. And it goes on to say that Christ gave his disciples no command to write, but only to teach. Going therefore, "Teach ye all nations, teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you," he says in Matthew 28:19 and 20, "As the Father has sent me, I also send you." John 20:21. So throughout scripture, Old and New Testament, God provided a priesthood for that purpose. We see it first in the Urim and Thummim in the Old Testament, those stones that were in the breastplate of the Ephod of the priesthood, the high priesthood, the lampstand in the tabernacle, and also in Sirach chapter 45.

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0:12:55.7 S2: Sirach chapter 45 verse 17 says, "In his commandments, he gave him authority in a statutes and judgements to teach Jacob the testimonies and to enlighten Israel with his law." This whole chapter of Sirach is one of the most beautiful accolades of the Old Testament priesthood in the scriptures. And what I love about that particular verse is that it shows that it was the priests who taught the people through the statutes and the judgements and the testimonies of the law. It was the priesthood's job to teach the people about the law. And it remains that way. God is always consistent. He doesn't change. And so the apostles, as priests, they were given that role. Therefore, the church is presented to us in the New Testament as a living and an undying society composed of the teachers and the taught. The encyclopedia says, "Christ is in the church and is its head.

0:13:56.0 S2: And he promised that the Holy Spirit would be with it and abide in it. He will teach you all things and bring things, all things to your memory, whatsoever I have said to you." And so Paul calls the church the pillar and the foundation of the truth which means for all of my non-Catholic listeners out there and for those of you who have non-Catholic brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, relatives, coworkers, whatever, who accuse the church of disallowing private interpretation, Paul himself disallows private interpretation. We're not allowed to judge the scriptures privately on matters that the church has spoken about definitively. Now, there aren't a whole lot of those, actually, but Paul says that the church is the pillar and the foundation of truth, not the Bible.

0:14:51.8 S2: And this is because the apostles taught both orally and in writing. In 1st Corinthians 11:2, Paul says, "Hold fast to the traditions I handed onto you." In 2 Thessalonians 2:15, he says, "Hold fast to the traditions, whether they're oral or by letter." In Chapter 3 Verse 6 of 2 Thessalonians, he says, "Shun those acting not according to tradition." In John 21:25, we hear John say that not everything Jesus said was recorded in scripture. And those things are what the church understands to be the oral tradition that the apostles handed down. And the Bible itself says, St. Peter says in 2 Peter 1:20 that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of private interpretation. And so if it's not private, it must be public. And if it's public, where is it? In the 25,000 plus denominations of non-Catholicism or Protestantism? I don't think so. I don't think that the Holy Spirit is schizophrenic. There is truth. He has revealed it and he reveals it through the scriptures, through the deposit of faith, both orally and in written form according to St. Paul and according to St. Peter. Now, when Peter says that no prophecy is a matter of private interpretation, people will say, "Well, that's just prophecy."

0:16:14.6 S2: Well, in Revelation, it says that all scripture is prophecy of Jesus. So it's not just a matter of, "Prophecy," because all scripture is prophecy in one way or another, regarding Jesus. And if all scripture is prophecy and no prophecy of scripture is a private interpretation, then there is no private interpretation. That's my point. Now, that's not to say that the church has an interpretation on every single verse. And it's not to say that they don't... The scriptures don't apply to each of us, even as they have their own context and their own audience and their own reason for being written. The Holy Spirit makes the scriptures alive to each of us. But my point is that the church when there is an interpretation, the church is the authority there. Now, we talk about the church fathers, and I have these discussions all the time on social media with non-Catholics who they are militantly anti-Catholic, and they talk about... They deride and ridicule Catholics for talking about the church fathers.

0:17:26.6 S2: So I wanna say this about that. Well, not me. Actually, John Henry Newman said this [chuckle] that we don't go by the fathers and what they taught simply because they're men or because they're early or anything like that, we go by what they say as authoritative because they all agree. And when they all agree, the church says, on any matter, that shows that it was handed down as part of the deposit of faith, either scripturally in writing or orally. So when the church fathers agree on anything, it is authoritative. And the church has by virtue of the Holy Spirit who guides her in all truth, the church has the authority to interpret the scriptures. It's not a matter of private interpretation. Now, can the scriptures apply to me privately? Of course, they can. But the ultimate meaning is decided by the church. And the church was the Catholic church until the "Reformation," quote, unquote, which I would say was a rebellion. But either way, it's very important that we know when we're talking about the rule of life because we're gonna talk about discernment here in a few minutes.

0:18:43.0 S2: It's important to note that the Holy Spirit preserves the church from error. And because the Holy Spirit preserves the church from error, the church preserves me from error, the church preserves you from error. So when we're trying to make a decision and we're in the process of discernment, we have to say, "We must agree with what the church teaches." We discern and decide with the heart and the mind of the church. So the Catholic encyclopedia is really clear that the Scriptures are not a matter of private judgment, the Scriptures alone cannot be your sole rule of faith. The church goes on to appeal in the Catholic encyclopedia to the New Testament tradition.

0:19:28.8 S2: Meaning, the oral tradition of the apostles handed down through the centuries. The theologians and the fathers and the doctors of the church, and then faith and reason. All of that is under the heading of the rule of faith. So again, we're talking about the Holy Spirit as our rule of faith or our rule of life. And when we're talking about that, it probably gives you a little bit of the heebie-jeebies, where you're just a little nervous, "But what if I make a mistake?" And so that's why we're about to talk about discernment, but I want to just repeat what the Catholic encyclopedia says, "But since divine revelation is contained in the written books and unwritten traditions, the Bible and divine tradition must be the rule of our faith."

0:20:13.8 S2: "Since however, there are only silent witnesses and cannot interpret themselves, they are commonly termed proximate, but inanimate rules of faith, unless then the Bible and tradition are to be profitless, we must look for some proximate rule which shall be animate or living, and that proximate rule which is animate and living is the church and the Holy Spirit is what animates and causes the church to be alive." Your reminder, according to Jesus, your memory, your spiritual director is the Holy Spirit. God speaks. He is always speaking, he is always working every day, right now, "For all who are led by the Spirit are sons of God," Paul says in Romans 8:14. So we're not living as a Child of God if we're not allowing ourselves to be led by the Spirit. We don't lead him and ask him to follow. He leads us and we follow him, but he's like the wind. So last week, we looked at some things that only the Holy Spirit can do, only the Holy Spirit draws us to God, only the Holy Spirit makes us want to pray, want to come to church, want to do the things that we're supposed to do.

0:21:33.7 S2: Jesus said, "But He's always working." Jesus said, "My Father is working still and I am working. Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing, for whatever he does that the Son does likewise, for The Father loves the Son and shows Him all that He himself is doing." So Jesus shows us the model for how to follow God,

how to follow the Holy Spirit. It's a matter of a love relationship and it's a matter of obedience. It's a matter of knowing that the Holy Spirit is working and looking for where He's working, the signs of His work. We know some of the things that the Holy Spirit does, but then once we think we've heard, how do we know that we've actually heard from him? Because, "The heart is deceitful among all things," the book of Jeremiah says. And we don't always know, "Is this my voice? Or is this His voice?" So the first key is obedience, and it has to be settled.

0:22:39.4 S2: You have to choose once and for all, "Am I gonna follow God completely?" You can't have one foot in and one foot out and be led by the Holy Spirit, you have to be all in. If you're having trouble hearing from the Holy Spirit and knowing that it's him, as I said last week, you have a problem at the core of your Christian life. We have to know how the Holy Spirit is moving and where he's speaking and what he's saying in order to follow him. And the main key to that, first and foremost, is radical obedience. I want you to choose right now, if you have never chosen, I want you to choose. Joshua, the Book of Joshua says, "Choose this day whom you will serve." Will it be God or will it be the world? Will it be God or will it be your family? Will it be God or will it be something else? Who are you going to follow? Because if you are not willing to follow, you will never be led by the Holy Spirit and experience the thrill of what that means.

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0:25:20.8 S2: "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God" Romans 8:14, Paul says. So we have to be led by the Holy Spirit or else we're not living as a child of God, and the first key to that is absolute obedience and choosing once and for all. And this is actually something only the Holy Spirit can do for us. "No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit," Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:3. The word Lord is the same idea as the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send, "in my name." Lord and my name are almost synonymous because if we are following Jesus' teaching, then we are living according to his name. We are calling him Lord, he is the boss. That's all that means. He is the boss. We choose once and for all that God is going to be the boss of our lives, the teachings of Jesus are going to guide us, they're going to be our rule, they're going to be

the thing that we listen to above everything else, and that it requires a choice, we have to absolutely choose. It's not a matter of feelings, you just choose, it's a matter of the will. And after there is obedience, the determination to obey, the second thing is that we determine to deny Him nothing.

0:26:43.7 S2: And we talked about this a couple of weeks ago, where, just try it for 40 days where you just do everything you think the Holy Spirit might be prompting you to do, and this is a... It's a crucible because you're like, "I'm not sure," but in trying it, you learn. There are two words in life with the Holy Spirit that cannot go together, 'No and Lord.' You cannot proceed in following God, you cannot proceed in discerning His voice until you can honestly say, "Whatever you want of me, Lord, I will do it." It's the idea of Mary's fiat, "Yes, Lord." And then also in the idea of obedience, first of all, we're gonna choose, secondly, we're gonna deny Him nothing, but thirdly, we're gonna remember the season of life that we're in because this is important when we're discerning what God wants us to do. Every one of us lives in seasons, you know seasons of the year, but also in seasons of life, and we have these mood swings and those are also spiritual. Everything is spiritual ultimately. Everything ultimately is spiritual. And so in the beginning of our spiritual life, perhaps we found St. Therese and her little way. And we were all into that.

0:27:53.6 S2: We were really enthusiastic and we run forward for a few days or weeks and then later those feelings cool off and we're weary and we're retired and we're just dragging ourselves along, a machine doesn't work this way. A machine always produces the same thing. You can estimate exactly what it's gonna produce and how much and when but a living thing has seasons. It's summer and its winter, and God doesn't expect the same things from us early on as He does later on, and the seasons in our lives will change what works. This is actually part of the stages of prayer, what works in the beginning stops working at some point and that's purposeful, and we feel all of the sweet consolation feelings in the beginning, and then they dry up and we're kinda standing around going, "Oh my gosh, what does this mean? God must be mad at me?" But that's not the case at all. It's a stage, it's a season. So we have to keep in mind when we're talking about this radical obedience, once we've chosen, we've chosen Him above all things, we've decided we're not gonna deny Him anything, we have to also keep in mind the seasons of our lives, but then, then if the Holy Spirit is going to be our rule of life, we have to know how to discern.

0:29:08.2 S2: There are two types of discernment or revelations of God, I should say, there are two types of inspirations from the Holy Spirit, one is extraordinary, and the other is ordinary. The extraordinary will be something like Paul on the road to Damascus where he's blinded by the light and he hears Jesus' voice and it is clear and shocking and miraculous, it is a miraculous intervention, that would be extraordinary. And that's pretty rare. Usually, God reserves those. The Holy Spirit does that when he has a role in the church for that person to occupy, and that's exactly what Paul was being called to, not only a role in the church, but as an apostle, and not one of the original.

0:29:52.8 S2: He was an extraordinary apostle, we could even say. And so the extraordinary inspirations of the Holy Spirit are pretty rare, but we see those throughout the Old Testament for sure. Abraham, Moses, David, but God speaks to us in those same ways or else He wouldn't include those things in the Scriptures for us, but mostly He does it through the ordinary inspirations which are usually begun with an inner attraction, we're attracted to something. And, of course, we have to be careful with that, because we've all heard people say and you've heard me say a million times, "Well, Jesus said this to me and the Holy Spirit said I needed to do this and do that. The Holy Spirit spoke to me."

0:30:32.7 S2: In fact, it reminded me of when I was coming into the Catholic church, I had actually already come in and my oldest son at the time was eight and he looked at me over the kitchen table doing his rosary for homeschool one morning, and he said, "Mama, God just said something to me." And I mean, we hear people say that and you take it with a grain of salt because if you don't know the things that only the Holy Spirit can do and you don't know the things that the Holy Spirit would do, then some of the stuff that people says that God told him to do is absurd. And so I took it with a grain salt. I was standing at the kitchen doing dishes and I said, "He did. So what did He say?" And he said, "The Holy Spirit told me that I needed to get baptized." And because I know that that is something that only the Holy Spirit would say to him, I knew that it was indeed the Holy Spirit. And even now it chokes me up that my eight-year-old heard from the Holy Spirit, but the prophecies of the Old Testament said that the young boys and girls would also prophesy [chuckle] and so that is characteristic of the New Testament church, the time of the Messiah and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

0:31:43.0 S2: And so when he said that, I took it with a grain of salt, but as soon as I heard what it was that the Holy Spirit said to him, I knew that it was indeed the Holy Spirit, and so I followed it, and he did get baptized and when he did, my newborn son was also baptized and that made three of us Catholic and my poor husband was present, and it was a whole long story, that's in Just Rest. But my point here is that when we think that we've heard from the Holy Spirit, we have to be discerning, "Because the heart is deceitful above all things. Who can know it?" We have to know that those inner attractions don't always come from the Holy Spirit. We have to know what the Holy Spirit would say and the things only He can do, and the things that He wouldn't say and that He doesn't say. And even when our conscience is well-formed, we know the teachings of the church, most of them, we know that we have definitely decided once and for all to follow God, we've decided that we're not gonna deny Him anything, we're keeping in mind the seasons of our lives, even then we can deceive ourselves or we can be deceived and sometimes it's just hard to know, it's hard to know and so Jesus warns us not to pull up the wheat with the weeds in Matthew 13:29.

0:32:57.8 S2: The thing to remember, one of the things to remember when we're discerning is the very first thing under obedience has to be detachment. Remember that the two categories of the inspirations of the Holy Spirit are extraordinary and ordinary, and in discernment, detachment is the number one thing. If we cannot be detached, then we should not move forward. Now, I know that this is kind of difficult when you have a really big decision and there's a timetable involved and a deadline, sometimes this is hard and in discernment, your greatest difficulty is probably not gonna be choosing between the good and the bad because that's pretty obvious, but between what is good and what is best.

0:33:39.5 S2: And so the discernment rules that the church offers us, particularly through Ignatius of Antioch, are really important for us to keep in mind. Now, my job as the Catholic Evangelista is to try to distill huge bodies of work like that into something practical and accessible for you. And so I actually ran across in a book on the Holy Spirit by Father Wilfrid Stinissen, I ran across a summary of Ignatius' rules for discernment, this is a real concise guide for you, and I'll type it up and leave it in the notes so you can just print it off and put it somewhere when you're making a decision, when you're trying to discern whether or not it's the voice of the Holy Spirit that you're hearing.

0:34:24.6 S2: But before we even get to those, it's really important to emphasize the need for

detachment. You're detached if you don't prefer one thing over another, you're not drawn to one thing over another or if you are, you don't care one way or the other, you can live either way. You may have a like or a dislike in the situation on the surface, but it doesn't matter because those feelings aren't going to influence whether or not you follow God in the matter, whatever it is. When you have detachment, it gives you a real freedom and a flexibility, you're not fixated, and so everything is possible. You're not an exclamation point, but a question mark.

0:35:07.1 S2: All of the possibilities remain open. Nothing is decided yet. You don't have to change your plans because you don't have any. You're not gonna complain about it and you're not gonna be disappointed because it doesn't matter. Detachment allows you to live in eternity in the now, the moment, the eternal moment that God lives in, in himself, so that the field of vision is not reduced to one possibility and it's not limited by your preferences. All the possibilities have a chance and one of the most exciting things about following God is the amazement that you feel when you see how inventive and how ingenious God is.

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[music]

0:36:25.5 S2: When you lay something at His feet, a decision that you have to make that seems like there's no way forward because there are two conflicting needs, the things that He does with that, they are amazing. For instance, I think I may have shared this with you before, but back during COVID when we were supposed to be wearing masks to mass, that's before they shut the churches down or maybe it was after, when they opened back up, I think that's when it was, but we were required to mask during mass, and there was just something about that that I just couldn't abide by.

0:37:01.1 S2: And I know that there are some of you that are gonna be shaking your head upset at me for this, but I'm just saying it was just untenable to me, I could not do it, especially because of the story of Moses and his unveiled face and seeing the face of God and how his face glowed, just a bunch of things, and I was really, really conflicted about it, and I wouldn't go back to church until I could get this discernment thing settled. And so I went to the Holy Spirit because I was feeling guilty because it seemed to me that I was choosing not masking over the Eucharist, and that felt wrong. And yet I could not force myself to mask, even...

0:37:48.0 S2: Even in that situation, unless I knew for sure that that's what the Holy Spirit wanted me to do. So I went the Holy Spirit with this conflict between two very important things and I asked the Holy Spirit, what do I do about this? And at that time, I had been veiling for mass for, I guess, a couple of years and I saw in prayer, I saw my veil wrapped around my face. And I almost laughed out loud, I was like, "That is brilliant." That is brilliant because it covers my face, making everyone feel safe, yet it's not a mask, I can breathe, I can be obedient to the requirement for a face covering and I can still remain true to my conviction. This is what I mean by taking these sorts of conflicts to

the Holy Spirit and watching what he'll do with them because if I had... I didn't want a mask, but I would have if he had made it clear that that's what he wanted me to do, I would have done it. So I was detached, I had a preference, but not to the point that I would not do what I didn't wanna do, so I was detached enough that I was willing to wear it if I had to, but I wanted to know from him [chuckle], "Do I have to?"

0:39:07.5 S2: And he gave me this very creative way to satisfy both things, both my conviction and the requirement from the parish and the diocese. So when we are detached, we leave the space open for the Holy Spirit to do something that we never expected and that's the quality of the wind that Jesus is talking about when he teaches us about the Holy Spirit. So don't move forward until you can be detached enough that whatever he says, do, you will do it and I would have done it, and I truly... Whatever it was, I would have done it because I had decided many, many years ago that I was always gonna follow God. I'm not gonna deny him anything and this was a season of mass going or mass attendance and participation in which there was a conflict for me, a conviction in my heart and my soul and then when I took it to him, I was detached enough that I was willing to do what I didn't wanna do, if that's what he asked me to do. So detachment then is so important before you even start the discernment process, you really have to get detached and you have to ask the Holy Spirit to help you be detached, then you can proceed to the steps. The first step or the first question in the discernment process should be, is it scriptural?

0:40:27.9 S2: Particularly, is it according to the gospels? Because the Gospels are Jesus's direct teaching. The Catholic encyclopedia itself says that scripture and tradition is first the deposit of faith, the Bible itself says that. So that's a matter of the church, it's not a private interpretation. So was it scriptural for me to wear a mask? Well, it was, if the bishop required it, it was scriptural. It was also scriptural to not necessarily wear one for other reasons. So I had this dilemma and I wasn't sure which way to go. So I took it to him, it wasn't against Scripture for sure, but either way, the first question has to be, is it scriptural? The fathers are adamant that scripture is primary in all teaching, if we're teaching a catechism class or anything, whatever we're teaching in the Church, the Scripture is always primary. When we're making decisions, Scripture is always primary because it's part of the deposit of faith, but the church is included in that because first of all, it's the church's job to interpret Scripture, and secondly because there are oral traditions passed down to us by the disciples, the apostles, that we must also adhere to and those church fathers are the evidence of what those are when they're not explicit in the scriptures themselves.

0:41:52.8 S2: So one of the ways that we can know that the Holy Spirit is speaking through the scriptures is... I know you've... I actually put this on the community. I know you've had the experience where you've read a verse or a passage a bunch of times before, and then suddenly you see something new in it for the very first time, and what that is, it's not a truth, this truth that you're seeing, it's not this concept that now you have to try to figure out how to work it into your life. That truth is an encounter with the person of the Holy Spirit, who is speaking through those scriptures. God is alerting you that He wants to apply that truth to your life right now. That's how he shows you what He's doing in your life. And this happens on a daily basis through the readings of the church, this is why I'm constantly harping on doing the daily readings with love the word every single day.

0:42:45.9 S2: God is speaking, the Holy Spirit is speaking to his church every single day through the readings and if you're not reading them, you're not listening to his voice. You're not gonna know where He's leading you, you're not gonna know what truce He is building into your life right now,

you're not gonna know what direction to take because you're not listening, we must be in the scriptures on a daily basis, and that's when we'll see things in them that we never saw before, and when we do, that's an encounter with the person of the Holy Spirit who is showing us what He's doing in our lives. He knows the heart and the mind of God, He speaks to us through His word, and He makes known to us what he wants to do and is doing in our lives, and when he does that, it is an invitation to join him and cooperate with him there and that will require an adjustment to His word.

0:43:35.7 S2: So scripture first, is it scriptural, is it according to the teachings of the church? Well, most of the time, we're not gonna know necessarily, we can go investigate, but we have to know for sure if it's not. If it's against the teaching of the church, then we know for sure that that's not from the Holy Spirit, contraception would be one of those areas, and I don't have time to get into that, but it's just the first example that came to mind. If it's against the teachings of the church, then the Holy Spirit is not saying it. The third rule is, is it reasonable according to our faith? And so according to our faith, that means it's not a worldly reason, the world reasons that, of course, it's reasonable to live with contraception, of course, it is, that's a worldly way to reason, but the church's way is the way of faith. And she has wonderful, beautiful, godly, important reasons for that. Because God himself is very clear about life-giving and contraception is abortifacient, and so that teaching of the church would be an example of, if I thought God was saying to me, "I need to be on the pill," we would know for sure that that's not the Holy Spirit.

0:44:44.7 S2: The Holy Spirit is orderly and reasonable. Now, here's where we get into the area of the extraordinary inspirations and the ordinary inspirations because an extraordinary inspiration will feel unreasonable. When God came to Abraham and said, "Abraham, leave everything you know and go travel to this land that you don't know anything about" or, Paul, "I want you to leave Judaism and I... Well, not leave it, but I want you to move beyond Judaism and follow me." Those of course, were situations that seemed unreasonable in a worldly way, but according to the faith, they're perfectly reasonable. God asked us to come out of the boat and walk on water with him sometimes, it has to be reason that is enlightened by faith. The fourth question is, does it bring me peace? Do I feel at peace when I consider this option? Which option brings me the most peace? The fifth question is, does it require excessive demands? Had a woman one time with severe ADHD who wanted to write a book and felt the Holy Spirit was calling her to a ministry on thousands and thousands of people with writing and speaking, and she had such severe ADHD she could barely get out of her bed in the morning.

0:45:56.8 S2: And so that sort of demand would be unreasonable, the demands of God requires small steps. And that leads to the next question, does it require an abandonment of my duty and my vocation? If so, it's probably not the Holy Spirit. If you are married, the Holy Spirit is not gonna call you to leave your family and go be a missionary by yourself in Thailand because the church teaches that marriage is a vocation, and that is the secondary vocation under our primary vocation, which is God first and then our vocation. So we bloom where we're planted, we take each small step as God reveals it because he always works in a sequence to accomplish His purposes.

0:46:40.6 S2: When he gets ready for you to take a new step or a new direction in his activity, it's gonna be in sequence with what he's been doing already in your life. So you can look back on these big spiritual markers and you can see, so what has God been doing in my life up to this point and what might he be saying to me now? I had this very situation in a consult this week about a woman who was discerning whether or not she needed to do a particular job in the ministry and this is again an example of what's choosing between what's good and what's best because she could have, of

course, done all the things that she saw needed to be done in the parish, but was it according to her gifts and temperament and the things that she had been doing up to that point in her life? It wasn't.

0:47:27.2 S2: And so she was able then to focus her energy instead of on the good thing and save it for the best thing, and most of the time when the Holy Spirit speaks in those inner inclinations, he's doing it to change us from the inside out. He's not calling us off to some big job. He wants to change us from the inside out.

[music]

0:47:51.5 S3: Thank you for listening to the Bible study Evangelista show. Find out more at biblestudyevangelista.com.