

ANNE
GRAHAM
LOTZ

JESUS
IN ME

SNEAK
PEEK



SAMPLE
ONLY

Experiencing *the* Holy Spirit
as a Constant Companion

Praise for
Jesus in Me

“Fifteen years ago, I sat in an arena with thousands of other women as Anne Graham Lotz expounded on the person and power of the Holy Spirit. Every word was like a lit match catching fire in my soul. Since then, I’ve gotten an up-close, personal look at Anne’s relationship with the Spirit of God. She walks with Him, listens to Him, and rests on His power to fulfill the Father’s purposes for her. The truths that she has taught me—and that she now shares with you in this book—have come not just from deep study but also from the personal experience of a woman who has learned the rhythms of grace through a lifetime of faithfulness.”

—PRISCILLA SHIRER, Bible teacher and author

“This book is a genuine treasury of wisdom that can be attained only through a life of walking with God and being led by His Holy Spirit. I am thrilled Anne Graham Lotz has walked this walk so that she can talk this talk for our benefit! This is about the only way to fully live the life for which we were each created. Read it and rejoice!”

—ERIC METAXAS, *New York Times* number one best-selling author
of *Bonhoeffer* and *Miracles*

“One of the things I’ve always appreciated about Anne Graham Lotz is her passionate desire to pursue God and know Him intimately. In this recent season of suffering, Anne has learned some profound lessons and experienced the Holy Spirit as her constant companion, comforter, and friend. The result is her new book, *Jesus in Me*. I highly recommend it.”

—GREG LAURIE, senior pastor of Harvest Christian Fellowship

“Most of us would give anything to be literally led through the day by the tender, firm hand of our Savior. How we’d love to hear His voice telling us clearly which way to turn and when to stop. And, oh, if we could only feel the nearness

and sweetness of His presence! The good news is we *can*! In her new and most remarkable book, Anne Graham Lotz succinctly explains how the Spirit who resides within us *is* the Spirit of Jesus Himself. Hence the title *Jesus in Me*. My friend details not only how to lean on the Spirit of Jesus but also how to recognize His voice, perceive His touch, sense His nearness, and respond to His instruction. I heartily recommend this excellent book to anyone who desires a closer communion with Christ!”

—JONI EARECKSON TADA, founder of Joni and Friends International
Disability Center

“I just finished spending the day reading Anne’s wonder-filled book *Jesus in Me*. It is truly a spiritual thriller—for isn’t that what it is like when a child of God discovers he or she not only is indwelt by God’s Spirit but also can be divinely led and empowered by His Spirit in every circumstance of life? The theology is clear in these pages, and you’ll find story after story of what this Spirit-directed walk looks like in the varied trials, twists, and turns of life.”

—KAY ARTHUR, author, Bible teacher, and cofounder of Precept
Ministries International

“It is one thing to read a book *about* the Holy Spirit, but it is another thing altogether to read a book by an author who is *experiencing* the ongoing presence and power of the Holy Spirit. *Jesus in Me* is a living testimony that will teach you, encourage you, and inspire you to be like Christ. Regardless of where you are in your life today, God will use these transforming words to meet you at the point of your greatest need. He *is* with you always, even until the end of the earth.”

—DR. RONNIE FLOYD, senior pastor of Cross Church and president
of the National Day of Prayer

“*Jesus in Me* is a simple yet powerful book about the truth of who the Holy Spirit is and the importance of how He works in our lives. Within every page you will

discover what it means to have Jesus fully alive inside you! This book is a much-needed read for the body of Christ today.”

—DARRYL STRAWBERRY, evangelist and former major league
baseball player

“Anne Graham Lotz stands as one of the most anointed and gifted voices in modern-day Christianity. In her new book, *Jesus in Me*, Anne equips us with a biblically substantiated framework for a life driven, convicted, and comforted by God’s precious Holy Spirit. This book will not just inspire you; it will empower you!”

—SAMUEL RODRIGUEZ, lead pastor of New Season, president of the
National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, author of *You
Are Next*, and executive producer of the movie *Breakthrough*

JESUS
IN ME

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Heaven: My Father's House

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Hardcover ISBN 978-0-525-65104-8

eBook ISBN 978-0-525-65108-6

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Jacket design by Kristopher K. Orr

Author is represented by Alive Literary Agency, 7680 Goddard Street, Suite 200, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80920, www.aliveliterary.com.

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Published in the United States by Multnomah, an imprint of Random House, a division of Penguin Random House LLC.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Lotz, Anne Graham, 1948- author.

Title: Jesus in me : experiencing the Holy Spirit as a constant companion / Anne Graham Lotz.

Description: Colorado Springs : Multnomah, 2019. | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018058173 | ISBN 9780525651048 (hardcover) | ISBN 9780525651086 (electronic)

Subjects: LCSH: Holy Spirit. | Spirituality—Christianity.

Classification: LCC BT121.3 .L68 2019 | DDC 231/.3—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2018058173>

Printed in the United States of America

2019—First Edition

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Dedicated to the Lonely

To them God has chosen to make
known . . . the glorious riches of
this mystery, which is *Christ in you*,
the hope of glory.

—COLOSSIANS 1:27

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Introduction

Experiencing the Holy Spirit as a Constant Companion

Weather permitting, early each morning that I am home, I walk and run for about two and a half miles. This has been my routine for over thirty years. As I grow older, I also grow more grateful for the physical ability to maintain this exercise. I have been consistent and committed to it, not just for the physical benefits but also because it is a stress reliever. The burdens of the day seem to be placed on hold for the thirty or forty minutes it takes to complete my route.

Over the years I have had multiple walking partners who have either moved on to other forms of exercise or dropped exercising altogether. The friend who walks with me now from time to time is a delight. While walking, we engage in energetic discussions, solve world problems, share insights into Scripture, and often end by praying for each other. Her companionship has made me aware of an interesting facet of my routine. When she walks with me, the journey does not seem nearly as long or arduous as when I walk alone. With her beside me, I seem to have more joy, more energy—and the time seems to fly by. Somehow, her presence makes my walk easier.

On the other hand, when I walk by myself, the routine seems harder, longer. My hamstrings seem tighter and unwilling to stretch for long strides. My knees

ache when I pick up my pace for a jog. My breath seems more labored and shallow. My mind shifts into neutral. I find myself just trying to make it to the next bend in the trail, to the next familiar tree, to the third bridge that marks the ascent to the parking lot, to my waiting car on which I lean as I work through final stretches.

While the direction, pace, and length of the routine are the same whether I walk alone or with someone, a good companion makes a distinct difference in my overall enjoyment and well-being.

Which brings me to the walk of life. Living day after day, week after week, year after year requires effort, energy, commitment, focus, thought.

To be perfectly honest, I'm old enough to know that the path of life leads through emotional, physical, relational, and spiritual aches and pains. Some are irritating. Some disruptive. Some much more serious and even life threatening. At times I have found myself just trying to make it through this day. This month. This year. "If I can just make it to Easter break." "If I can just get to the beach for our vacation." "If I can just hang on until Christmas." There are times when I have fulfilled a commitment just to check it off my list and get on to the next thing so that I can get on to the next thing. The walk itself becomes a burden. Drudgery.

What I have needed is a walking partner. For life. Someone who would come alongside me and share every step of my journey, day in and day out. Someone in whom I could confide. Someone with whom I could discuss issues that are on my mind. Someone who would answer my questions. Help me with decisions. Listen to my complaints, my fears, my worries, my dreams. Someone I could trust. Believe. Enjoy. Someone whose very presence would bring joy. And peace. And hope. Someone who would know me. Who would understand me. Someone who would love me!

Where have I found such a walking partner? Amazingly, as a child of God, I didn't have to look around for one. I just needed to look within. Because God has given me the ultimate walking partner for life: His Spirit. And not just for life, but forever!

In this book I will not attempt a full, in-depth treatise on the Holy Spirit, nor will I explore all the ways He is understood or misunderstood, abused or used, sensationalized or normalized, neglected or prioritized. I will seek to share with you what I have experienced personally about this incredible divine Companion. While I do not claim that I can even begin to know all there is to know about Him, I am learning to enjoy and trust Him more and more. If anything, the more my knowledge of the Holy Spirit grows, the more I learn I still have a lot to learn! One thing I know for certain: He is not an optional extra in my Christian life. He is a divine necessity.

The indispensable necessity of the Holy Spirit has never been more evident in my life than during the writing of this book. As I began the challenge of putting words on a page, my ninety-nine-year-old father, whom I adored, went to Heaven. I was already a widow, and his homegoing left me an orphan. Six months later I was diagnosed with breast cancer, went through follow-up surgery, then began the brutal chemotherapy treatments. Through the ups and downs, the tears and joy, the grief and comfort, I have experienced the constant companionship of the Holy Spirit.

I have learned day in and day out that the Holy Spirit is all that Jesus is, though without His physical body. He is Jesus without skin. Just as Jesus is the exact representation of God the Father, the Spirit is the exact representation of Jesus's mind, will, and emotions. He is the invisible Jesus. The Holy Spirit is . . . *Jesus in me!*

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Anne Strawhake". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Part One

LOVING THE PERSON
OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Though you have not seen him, you love him.

—1 PETER 1:8

Have you ever formed ideas or opinions about someone based on what others told you? And then when you met the person for yourself, did you discover that actually he was very different from what you had been led to believe?

Recently I received an invitation to appear on a television talk show hosted by a couple who had been in the news frequently and had received quite a bit of negative publicity. Without intending to, I had absorbed some of the public's disparaging attitude. I almost declined the invitation, but when some respected advisers urged me to accept it, I did. What I discovered was almost the polar opposite of what I had been led to believe.

The couple was humble, warm, charming, thoughtful, encouraging, and supportive. They were easy to talk with, and I found my spirit resonating with theirs. To this day, I'm struck by the contrast between the public's perception of them, as well as my own preconceived opinions, and the reality of their lovely personalities and authentic testimonies.

While our perception of other people can be dramatically different from reality, the same may also be said about our perception of the Holy Spirit. Could your perception be different from the truth or even in sharp contrast to it?

I've heard the Holy Spirit spoken of as an "it," a feeling, a dove, a flame, a ghost, an emotion, or even an ecstatic experience. He is frequently referred to as the third person of the Trinity, as though He is the least of the Trinity or a post-script to the more significant Father and Son. All of which is inaccurate.

While the Holy Spirit may be symbolized by a dove or flame, while His presence may be accompanied by an emotion or feeling or ecstatic experience, He Himself is distinctly separate from those things. The Holy Spirit is not a

thing but a person. His personhood is emphasized in John 16, when eleven times in eight verses, He is referred to by the personal, masculine pronouns *He*, *Him*, and *His*.¹

So at the outset of our exploration of who the Holy Spirit is, we need to be clear that we are not speaking of an “it.” We are speaking of a “He.” He is a living person who has a mind, a will, and emotions. He is referred to as the third person of the Trinity not because He is the least but because He is the third person to be more fully revealed in Scripture.

In the Old Testament, although the Holy Spirit and God the Son—the living Word who became Jesus in the flesh—are present, it is God the Father who is primarily revealed. In the Gospels, while the Father and the Holy Spirit are certainly present, it is God the Son who is primarily revealed. Beginning with Acts and the epistles, although God the Father and God the Son are also present, it is primarily God the Holy Spirit who is revealed. In fact, the book of Acts is not about the acts of the disciples or the early church. It is a book about the acts of the Holy Spirit as He worked in and through the disciples and the early church.

If the Holy Spirit is a person with an intellect, will, and emotions, what is He really like? What is His personality? What are His responsibilities? Are you intrigued by this mysterious person? I know I have been and still am. One way we get to know Him is through His names.

In the Bible, names reveal the character of the person to whom they are given. For example, in the Old Testament, Abraham’s grandson was given the name of Jacob, which means “deceiver” or “supplanter.” Jacob grew up to be a man who deceived his father, Isaac. In doing so, Jacob supplanted his brother, Esau, as the heir to his father’s blessing. He was well named.

Twenty years after that deception, when Jacob returned to claim his inheritance, he was blocked from doing so by the angel of the Lord, who was a visible, tangible manifestation of the Lord Himself. After an entire night of struggling, God dislocated Jacob’s hip to force him to give in and give up. But instead of falling to the ground in a heap of self-pity, Jacob wound his arms around God’s

neck and said he would not let go until God blessed him. Right there, on the edge of the river that served as the border to the Promised Land . . . the river where they had been wrestling, God led Jacob to confess his name . . . who he was . . . the deceiver and supplanter. Then God changed Jacob's name to Israel, which means "a prince who has power with God." As a man broken, Jacob fully yielded his life to God, and he did indeed become a prince with power, the father of twelve sons who became the founding fathers of the nation that bears his name—Israel.²

Perhaps the most familiar example of how a name reveals someone's character is found in the name given to the Son of God. He was called Jesus, which means "Savior," "Rescuer," "Redeemer," "Deliverer"—the One who would save us from the penalty and power of sin.³ His name accurately describes who He was . . . and who He is.

So what about the Holy Spirit? In John 16:7 Jesus gave Him a name that is often rendered "Helper" in English but is a rich word that requires several English words to effectively capture its meaning. The Amplified Bible version of the same verse indicates that the word for "Helper" could also be rendered as follows: "I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counselor, Strengthenener, Standby) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him (the Holy Spirit) to you [to be in close fellowship with you]." In the following seven chapters, we'll consider together the personal and practical implications of each aspect of the Holy Spirit's name as listed in the Amplified Bible version of John 16:7.

One of my deepest, richest joys has been discovering by experience who the Holy Spirit is in every step of my life's journey. Each name that He has been given—Helper, Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor, Counselor, Strengthenener, and Standby—reveals another aspect of His beautiful character and has provoked in me a deep love for the One who is my constant companion . . . Jesus in me. My prayer for this book is that you, too, will discover Him by personal experience as your constant companion and that the discovery will lead you to love and rely on Him more.

Our Helper

As my husband Danny's health deteriorated due to type 1 diabetes and its complications, I stopped traveling for the most part and embraced the joy of being his caregiver for three years. On an August afternoon, he was sitting by the pool, playing with our dog, and just relaxing in the summer sun. I stayed in the house to get some work done. Suddenly I realized it had been over an hour since I last checked on him. I ran to the window, looked toward the pool, and saw he was not there. With relief, thinking he had come in without my awareness, I ran through the house, looking for him and calling his name. No familiar voice responded. Only silence. A deep foreboding gripped my heart as I ran back to the window and saw our dog sitting by the water's edge. When I called to him, he refused to come. I flew down to the pool and found what I knew I would.

There are no words to describe my desperate cry for help as I jumped into the pool, pulled my husband to the steps, and cradled his head on my lap. Even as I called his name over and over, even as I cried out to God for help, I knew I was looking at a man who was already seeing his Lord. The expression on his face was one of strength, confidence, and utter peace.

What transpired next required all the Helper's assistance to get me through: staying on the line after my emergency call to 911, EMS arriving, medics running through the backyard and dragging Danny out of my lap, news helicopters

swirling overhead, sheriff's deputies standing by the pool and guarding the property, cars filled with curious onlookers lining our street—and then the scene indelibly impressed on my mind when Danny was placed on a gurney and wheeled out of our yard as he left the house for the last time.

In His great compassion, the Helper sent visible helpers also: a chaplain with the sheriff's department who quietly stood by me as the EMS team worked on Danny, my son-in-law who put his arms around me as Danny was wheeled away, my children who came to sit with me in the small hospital ER waiting room, our doctor who appeared at Danny's bedside and urged me to put my husband on life support . . . just in case.

As I walked through the valley of the shadow that climaxed in Danny's official homegoing on the morning of August 19, 2015, I experienced moment by moment the quiet, gentle, loving presence of the Helper. Two days before our forty-ninth wedding anniversary, instead of enjoying a celebratory dinner together, I buried my beloved husband.

If I spent the rest of this book describing to you the Helper's aid and assistance to me during that time, I would still run out of pages. He poured out His help as I found myself in the position of comforting friends and family, speaking on August 21 to over one hundred men at the Bible study Danny had led, planning the service of celebration, and overseeing funeral arrangements. The incredible evidence of His supernatural help was revealed in the joy, peace, strength, and clear presence of mind that carried me through not just somehow but with absolute triumph! I will never cease to praise God for the One who "is my helper."¹

Recently when I went through my mail, I came across a note from the wife of a man who had served with Danny on the national board of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Her husband had just died. She wrote that she had been his caregiver for over five years. Then she testified, "Never could I have carried the 'thankful load' without my dependence upon the Holy Spirit." And I knew exactly what she meant.

Our Helper

What is your testimony? Whether you are a widower or a widow like me learning to live in a new reality, or a caregiver expending your life for an ailing spouse or elderly parent or disabled child, or a parent trying to raise your children to be followers of Jesus in a wicked world, or a businessperson operating according to biblical principles of integrity, or a politician walking a tightrope between truth and political correctness, or an educator teaching values along with the curriculum, or a cancer victim trying to navigate the maze of surgical options and treatments, the Helper is available to assist, aid, or furnish you with relief. I know. Just call on Him.

Our Comforter

I could not have made it through the days following the heart-shattering discovery of my husband's unresponsive body in our pool without the Helper. Not only did I experience His practical, moment-by-moment assistance during the crisis, but I also experienced in a very deep way His comfort and consolation.

I have been consoled by the Holy Spirit in His role as the Comforter during times of deep grief—from the loss of two babies in miscarriage to my son's diagnosis of cancer and then the breakup of two of his marriages to the death of my beloved mother followed by the death of my father to the diagnosis of my own cancer. But nothing—*nothing*—equals the comfort He has given me since Danny's move to our Father's house.

Not only did the Comforter work within me to quiet my heart, but He also sent people to comfort me with their loving thoughtfulness and presence from the moment Danny was taken to the hospital. Both nights that Danny was on life support, our son, Jonathan, stayed with him, while our younger daughter, Rachel-Ruth, came to spend the night with me.

I knew Rachel-Ruth could not stay with me much longer because she had three young children to care for. Without my ever voicing those thoughts, my other daughter, Morrow, and her husband, Traynor, suggested they move in with me. With a mischievous smile, I looked at my son-in-law and responded,

“Maybe, but you will have to ask me, your mother-in-law, if you can live with me.” With a twinkle in his eyes and a chuckle in his voice, Traynor asked, declaring it had always been his dream to live with his mother-in-law.

So Traynor and Morrow moved in with me that very day! They put all their household things in storage and for over a year lived in our two small upstairs rooms. Words fail to describe the comfort they brought to me as they quietly settled into my routine, blending it with theirs. For the fifteen months they lived in my home, we never had cross words, disagreements, or tension. Just blessing. For fifteen months I never spent the night alone in my house, which helped ease my sudden and acute loneliness in ways they will perhaps never know.

Each night, my daughter would fix dinner, then call us to the table for a wonderful meal. After dinner our devotions always focused on God’s blessings. Night after night. Week after week. Month after month. Some nights, Morrow and Traynor would sense my spirit was down, and then they would get up, stand over me with their hands on me, and as Traynor traced the Hebrew letters for “YHWH” on my forehead, they prayed God’s blessing over me: “The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.”¹ And I was comforted.

I knew my daughter and son-in-law were also grieving, but I was poignantly reminded that the Holy Spirit comforts us through the love and care of those around us. They allowed themselves to be the channel of the Spirit’s comfort, as God promised to “[comfort] us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.”²

The Holy Spirit Himself has comforted me on every level, on every day—and not only in regard to Danny. Sometimes He has used a passage of Scripture in my devotions to address some unspoken pain. Sometimes He has used another person’s seemingly random comment or email or text message. Sometimes He has used a thought or insight from a book I was reading or a sermon I was listening to.

One day, after I spoke at a large church, a woman approached me rather

shyly and handed me a slip of paper. When I got back to the hotel, I opened her note. On it she had drawn a picture. She said the picture best explained how the Lord had spoken to her through my message. She would have no way of knowing, but she was addressing the very issue I had been struggling with, and I knew the Holy Spirit was comforting me through her pencil sketch, which I still have in my Bible.

The Comforter seemed to pull out all the stops when my father moved to Heaven in February 2018. I received the news by telephone when I was in the presence of a dear friend. She immediately wrapped her arms around me and prayed as we both wept. From that moment forward, I was comforted by my family who surrounded me and by hundreds of friends who left so many voice mails and sent so many text messages to my cell phone that I had to silence it.

I'll never forget riding in the motorcade as we escorted Daddy the 120 miles from Asheville, near our family home, where he had been living, to Charlotte, North Carolina, his childhood hometown, where he would be buried. The route had been previously published, and the people of North Carolina poured out to pay their respects. For the entire route, any cars not already lined up beside the road pulled over and stopped—on both sides of the interstate. Tens of thousands of people stood beside the road, waving homemade signs, holding up Bibles or crosses with one hand while the other was placed over their hearts, or solemnly waving. I saw a mother holding a newborn, a father pushing his young daughter's wheelchair as close to the road as he could get, a rabbi blowing a shofar, fire engines with the American flag draped from their ladders on every overpass . . . all conveying that they shared in my family's grief. For that moment in time, it was as though the whole world had stopped to mourn and weep with us. And I was comforted.

Could it be that you have missed the comfort of the Comforter because it has come indirectly through someone or something else? Like Mary Magdalene at

Loving the Person of the Holy Spirit

the empty tomb, are your tears blinding you to the presence of Jesus right there beside you?³ Right there *within* you? My prayer is that He will use these words to comfort you as you experience the constant companionship of the Holy Spirit. Ask Him to open your eyes to the nearness of the One who is, in fact, Jesus in you.

Our Advocate

Have you ever needed an advocate? Someone who could plead your cause and give you favor in the eyes of your boss? Or parent? Or mother-in-law? Or committee chairman? One of the names given to the work of the Holy Spirit is that of Advocate.

My husband and I needed the Advocate to plead our cause during a time of public humiliation when we were, in essence, removed from the church where we had been members for fifteen years. My husband had been chairman of the board of deacons, the head of the men's fellowship, and the teacher of the largest Sunday school class in the church. But things began to unravel when the senior pastor retired and Danny was placed on the search committee for a new pastor. Danny took a firm, uncompromising position to uphold the inerrancy of Scripture, while all the other committee members, with one exception, rejected it. During a Sunday morning business meeting, he was publicly removed from the committee to the sound of applause filling the sanctuary.

Several weeks after my husband was removed from the search committee, deacons also voted to remove my Bible class of five hundred women from the church premises. Their fear was that, during the interim between pastors, the presence of my class would influence the congregation in a way they found unacceptable. In the days that followed, the local newspaper carried multiple stories giving details of Billy Graham's daughter being thrown out of a Baptist

church. While I refrained from public criticism of the church or anyone in it, I privately prayed for the Advocate to step up and defend me. He did! One year later, in that same newspaper that had carried the humiliating accounts of our removal, a full two-page profile effectively exonerated me and my class from any wrongdoing.¹

If you have traveled with a mission team or worked on a church staff or been involved in ministry outside your home, you may also have experienced strained or even broken relationships. We don't expect such hurtful issues to arise within the Christian community. Yet sadly they do all too often. Instead of becoming angry, bitter, or resentful, this is a time to turn to the Advocate and ask Him to plead your cause.

The Advocate knows what He is doing. And He has done some amazing things. We see Him at work in the shadows of the Old Testament. He gave Joseph favor with Potiphar until he was put in charge of everything that Potiphar owned; then favor with the prison warden, who put him in charge of the entire prison; then favor with Pharaoh himself, who placed him as second-in-command in Egypt, where Joseph saved the world—including his own family—during severe famine.² We see the Advocate at work when Nehemiah, the Persian king's cupbearer, was given favor to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls after years of Babylonian captivity and exile.³ And again when Queen Esther was given favor with the king, thus positioning her to save her people from annihilation.⁴

We also, of course, see Him at work in the New Testament. When the early church sent out the first two missionaries, they chose Paul and Barnabas, who in turn chose to take a young assistant with them, John Mark. But early in the journey, John Mark left them and went home to Jerusalem.⁵ When Paul and Barnabas returned sometime later, they gave a thrilling report of the impact of the gospel in the Gentile world to their sending church in Antioch and to the council in Jerusalem. After a time of preaching and teaching in Antioch, Paul felt led to go on another mission trip. Barnabas agreed to go but wanted to take John Mark. Paul sharply disagreed because the young man had deserted them

on their first trip, failing to complete his assignment. “They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company.”⁶ Paul and Barnabas went their separate ways, with Paul taking Silas, and Barnabas taking John Mark. While the blessing was that the missionary effort doubled from one team to two, it was obvious that the Advocate’s intervention was needed to reconcile these Christian brothers and ministry partners for their own sakes as well as to prevent a rift from developing in the early church.

While the Bible doesn’t give us details, we know that at the end of Paul’s life, one of the very last requests he made before his execution was to ask Timothy, “Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.”⁷ Obviously the Advocate had worked effectively to plead John Mark’s cause to the extent that he and Paul had become trusted ministry coworkers.

In what way do you need Someone to defend you? Jesus promised, “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you.”⁸ Whether your situation involves a misunderstanding with your neighbor, or a disagreement within your church, or tension in your home, or slander in your school, or gossip in your office, the Holy Spirit is available to defend you and plead your cause. Always. Ask Him. He’s never lost a case.

Our Intercessor

Whereas the Holy Spirit in His role as advocate pleads your cause and defends you, as an intercessor He actively works between you and others to reconcile differences. An intercessor is a mediator, and the Holy Spirit stands ready to serve as your go-between when relationships are strained or broken.

Every parent needs an intercessor! I certainly have—more times than I can count.

Our three children all loved attending Baylor University in Waco, Texas. The education was superb; the focus, Christ centered; and the social life, full of zest and fun. Danny and I had only one concern: the school was a twenty-four-hour one-way drive from our home in North Carolina. I consoled myself by saying it was really just a six-hour plane ride, but then, who can afford frequent plane flights? So we were able to count on seeing our children only twice a year while they were in school—over Christmas and summer breaks.

The second year our younger daughter, Rachel-Ruth, was at Baylor, she called home to discuss the classes she was signing up for in the spring semester. For the life of me, I can't remember now what they were, but I clearly remember we had a strong disagreement. The conversation ended with Rachel-Ruth hanging up on me. When I called back, there was no answer. Repeatedly. This was when the Intercessor stepped in.

By divine coincidence my schedule included a speaking commitment in Dallas within the month of that phone conversation with Rachel-Ruth. When I accepted the invitation, I had no way of knowing it would place me close to Rachel-Ruth at the very time I would need a face-to-face meeting with her. But, of course, the Holy Spirit had known, so He had made the arrangements. After fulfilling my responsibilities in Dallas, I got into a car and drove to Waco, then showed up at Rachel-Ruth's door. She threw her arms around my neck and said she was sorry for the separation that had come between us. Then we both wept as we talked the situation through until it was resolved. I knew the Intercessor had worked in both of our hearts—softening mine to more sympathetically listen to her reasoning for her course load and convicting hers to be more respectful in her tone as she explained her desires. In the end the Intercessor helped resolve and reconcile what had been a strained relationship.

One wonderful aspect of the Holy Spirit is that if He indwells you and indwells the person with whom you have a strained or broken relationship, you can pray and stir Him up within both of you. Ask Him to work in your heart and the other person's heart to bring you together.

I recently talked with a friend, Patti, about how she and her husband, John, applied this principle to their relationship with their daughter, Mandi, and her husband, Scott.¹ Early in Mandi's dating relationship with Scott, she began withdrawing from family functions and gatherings, and she withdrew most noticeably from Patti and John. Their very close family bond seemed to be lost almost overnight, without warning or explanation. Mandi became completely absorbed by her relationship with Scott along with some new friends who seemed to encourage the distancing, leaving Patti and John feeling confused and alienated from their daughter.

The situation deteriorated further when Mandi and Scott became engaged. They rushed into the marriage, dismissive of the traditional biblical parental blessing. After their wedding they had minimal contact with the family.

Patti and John spent many tear-filled nights in agony over the "loss" of their

beautiful daughter. They knew they were in a spiritual battle and were keenly aware the Enemy had targeted their family, seeking to destroy the cherished relationships.

Patti and John allowed their broken hearts to press them to their knees, where they prayed unceasingly that the Intercessor would intervene on their behalf. He did. An illness that ended in the loss of a beloved family member prompted more frequent communication between Mandi and her parents. Subsequently, the Holy Spirit began to stir in all of them a desire for reconnection.

Several years later, the arrival of Mandi and Scott's first baby gave everyone an overwhelming desire for what God intends the family to be. Soon after, the Intercessor moved in Scott's heart and inspired him to have a one-on-one conversation with John. They openly discussed the painful beginning of their relationship, which allowed for a more genuine relationship to blossom. Patti and John now find much joy in their role as doting grandparents, as well as being an integral part of their daughter's life.

Although they will always need the Intercessor's involvement, the healing has begun, the family unit has been restored, and the hearts of everyone continue to overflow with praise and gratitude to the One who made it all possible.

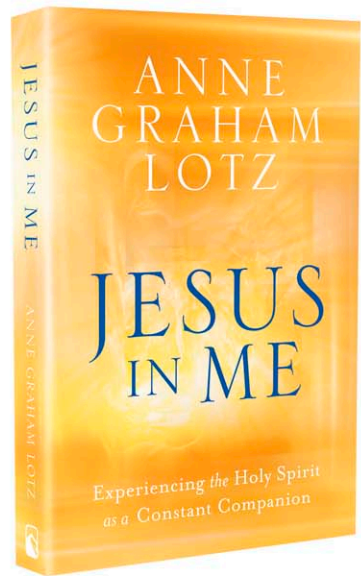
Even as I share with you these stories of the Intercessor's healing touch, I confess that I have had strained or broken relationships over the years that have not been resolved or reconciled, even though I have prayed earnestly. Still I am confident that the lack of resolution is not because the Intercessor has been inactive. I wonder whether it's more likely that some of those involved, including myself, have hardened their hearts to His activity. This is one reason it seems wise to pray with King David, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."² I also know that some wounds take time to heal and some broken things take time to mend.³ So I continue to pray for my heart, and those of others, to submit to the Intercessor's active involvement.

Loving the Person of the Holy Spirit

If you have a relationship that is strained or shattered, frayed or fractured, battered or broken, pray. Ask the Intercessor to search and soften your heart as He gets actively involved. He will. I know.

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