

You Don't Have to Carry This Alone

Numbers 11:24-30 & Acts 2:1-21
In the series "Spirit Unbound"

I have a confession. I am terrible at asking for help.

Early in my ministry, I took on the responsibility of planning a 30-hour retreat for the youth during which we would experience games, educational sessions, and do service work ... all while we were fasting for 30 straight hours. The key was to have lots of things to do and everything ready. Then we would have a special worship service with Communion to break the fast at the end before we shared a meal. This was before the days of quick Internet searches to find ideas and videos. I spent a huge number of hours, trying to put together the "perfect" retreat. As the deadline neared, I scrambled even faster to try to pull it all together. I started the retreat completely worn out, which made the whole weekend more challenging ... all because I didn't ask for help from any of the other adults who would participate.

And here's the thing I've noticed: I am not alone in this. We are a community of people who have been quietly convinced that needing help is the same thing as failing. And that conviction is costing us more than we know.

What would it look like if needing help — and giving help — wasn't a sign of weakness, but actually the whole point? (*pause*)

Today, many hearing this message are carrying too much.

The adult child driving a parent to appointments three times a week, managing their bills, their medications, their loneliness — while working full-time and raising kids of their own. The mom or dad going to bed every night

feeling like they did everything badly. The faithful volunteer who can't figure out how to say three little words: "I need help."

And the longtime member in their 70s or 80s who wonders if their best years are behind them. Not burned out from doing too much — aching from being overlooked.

All of these people, the caregiver, volunteer, parent, overlooked elder, are living with the same quiet belief: that asking for help shows weakness or incompetence. That needing others is a failure of character. That real strength means handling it yourself.

What we need today is not advice about better time management. What we need is to hear that God has been trying to answer this problem for a very, very long time. Let me take you back about three thousand years.

Moses stood up to the most powerful ruler in the world, led a nation out of slavery, delivered the laws that still shape Western civilization. He was THE guy. And he was completely falling apart. The people he led were complaining constantly — and Moses had had enough. He goes to God and says: "I can't do this anymore. This burden is too heavy. If this is what you have for me, just let me die right now." That's our man Moses. And I find him extremely relatable.

That's where our Old Testament reading picks up. The Lord's Spirit descended on 70 elders of the people gathered at the Tabernacle, their house of worship, and they prophesied. Two others, who were not with the 70, Eldad and Medad, also began prophesying in the camp. And when Joshua urged Moses to tell them to stop.

Some things to notice from this story.

When Moses complains that the burden of leadership and service is too heavy, God doesn't scold him. God doesn't tell him to be stronger or more faithful. God says, "Let me spread this around." Seventy leaders receive the same Spirit that is on Moses, and Moses loses nothing by sharing. God's response to burnout is not "try harder;" it's "let's share this."

Let me tell you about one person who found out that saying yes can change far more than she expected.

After the death of her 26-year-old daughter, Viola Vaughn moved to Senegal to help care for five grandchildren. She was grieving, exhausted, and had no grand plan to start a ministry or a school. Then a neighbor girl came to her door in danger of being pushed out of school, and Viola did the only faithful thing she could do: she said yes. One girl became a few girls. A few girls became a crowd. And what started as one woman simply trying to respond to the need in front of her grew into 10,000 Girls, a ministry that has helped thousands of young women learn, grow, and hope again. That is what God does when burden becomes blessing, and one person stops carrying everything alone. [Drew Hinshaw, "Senegal project aims to educate 10,000 girls," *TheWorld.org*, 08/02/2016, <https://theworld.org/stories/2016/08/02/senegal-project-aims-educate-10000-girls>. Accessed 05/23/2026.]

That is how God often works: not by making one person do everything, but by spreading the work, and the Spirit, farther than we imagined.

This next part of the story is easy to miss. The seventy elders gather at the official tent, which is the proper religious location. But two men, Eldad and Medad, stayed in the camp. They weren't at the meeting. They didn't follow the protocol. And the Spirit found them anyway.

This matters because it means God's Spirit does not wait for official permission or proper religious credentials. It shows up in the camp — in ordinary life, in unexpected people, outside the walls of formal religion. Wherever you are today, that's a valid address for the Spirit of God.

Joshua panics when he hears that unauthorized prophesying is happening. He is a loyal aide protecting Moses' authority: "Stop them!" And Moses says something extraordinary: "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish ALL of God's people were prophets."

Moses is not threatened by others sharing the Spirit. It does not diminish him. He actively wishes for more of it. The more the Spirit is shared, he understands, the more it flourishes. This is not how human power works — but it is exactly how God's Spirit works.

Moses' longing — "I wish all of God's people were prophets" — is not just a nice sentiment. It is a prayer. And Pentecost is God's answer. Moses prayed that prayer in the wilderness about 1,400 years before the event I'm about to describe. And God didn't forget it.

Skip forward about fourteen centuries. Jesus has been crucified and, according to his followers, raised from the dead. Before he left them, he told them to wait in Jerusalem. Something was coming. Acts tells us what happened next. Fifty days after Passover, about 120 followers of Jesus — men and women, young and old — are all together in one place. And then...

A sound like a violent rush of wind fills the house where they are. Things that looked like tongues of fire come from heaven, separate, and settle on each of them, and they start to speak in other languages they have never learned.

Notice: all of them were filled, not just the leaders. Not just Peter. Not just the apostles. All 120. The Spirit does not land on the platform and trickle down to the congregation. It lands on everyone at once.

While that's all remarkable, the real miracle is that people understood each other. The crowd heard the disciples speaking in their own native tongues — not a generic miracle language. Their own language. Their words for home. The miracle of Pentecost is not chaos; it's comprehension. The Spirit creates a community where people hear and understand each other across their deepest differences.

That's Pentecost. That's what God wanted the community of Jesus to be: a place where people feel genuinely heard and understood.

But some people in the crowd think the disciples must be drunk. Peter stands up and says no — and then quotes the prophet Joel, who lived about 800 years before this moment:

"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days." — Acts 2:17–18 (NIV, quoting Joel 2:28–29)

Sons AND daughters receive the Spirit. In the first century, women had no public voice in religious life. And God says: your daughters have something worth saying, and the Spirit will give them the words.

Young AND old receive the Spirit. The young were considered unproven. The old were sidelined. God says: visions for the young; dreams for the old. Both are needed. Neither generation has a monopoly on the Spirit.

Seniors — “the old shall dream dreams” is a promise, not a eulogy. Young people — your vision matters to God.

Even servants, both men and women, receive the Spirit. Slaves were property in the Roman world. And Joel says even they receive the Spirit. No life too broken, no background too complicated for God's Spirit to show up.

And I wonder if we get this connection: Moses said, "I wish all of God's people were prophets." Peter stands up on Pentecost and essentially says: "That prayer just got answered." What was a longing in the wilderness is now a reality in Jerusalem, and it hasn't stopped since.

The Spirit that was poured out that day is still being poured out.

Still showing up outside the tent.

Still finding people the official list never included.

Still distributing gifts to people who thought they (and who others thought) had nothing to offer.

So what does any of this, Moses in the wilderness and fire in Jerusalem, have to do with your Tuesday morning? Let me be direct with you. If God's Spirit is genuinely poured out on all people, then three things are true about you that may be difficult to believe:

One — you were never meant to carry what you're carrying alone.

Two — you have something to offer that the people around you need.

Three — God is already working in you, whether you've recognized it as such or not.

Those three things sound simple. But I think most of us live like none of them are true. So let's talk about what it actually looks like to change that.

Maggie Doyne was 18 when she arrived in Nepal and 19 when she co-founded the BlinkNow Foundation. By 25, she had become a mother to 40 children. She had just finished high school in New Jersey when she took a gap year to travel instead of going straight to college. She wasn't a missionary. She hadn't been sent by any organization. She was a teenager with a backpack.

In Nepal, she witnessed a young girl — about four years old — breaking rocks near a riverbed to survive. Doyne learned the girl was an orphan with no family. She thought, "If I don't do something, this will haunt me for the rest of my life." She gathered her babysitting savings — \$5,000 — bought a piece of land, and started a children's home with a local partner named Tope Malla, who had grown up an orphan himself.

Today, the Kopila Valley Children's Home and School includes a four-story Children's Village, a home for girls who have been victims of trafficking, a medical clinic, a program training indigenous women and farmers, and a team of more than 175 teachers and caregivers.

She was not on any official list. She was a teenager with babysitting money. And the Spirit found her where she was. [*New Jersey Monthly*: "Oscar-Contending Documentary Follows NJ Woman's Lifesaving Work in Nepal" (2025) — njmonthly.com. Accessed 05/23/2026. "Maggie Doyne on Uplifting Children and, In Turn, the World" — timesensitive.fm. Accessed 05/23/2026. BlinkNow Foundation: blinknow.org/history.]

The Spirit consistently shows up through people we have not fully counted. I wonder who that person is in this room today. I wonder if that person is you.

Let me offer some suggested next steps you might take. I don't want to leave you with a list of things you feel guilty about not doing. I want to leave

you with one, real, concrete next step that actually fits your life. Just pick from these options (or your own if the Spirit inspires you):

- **Ask for help in one place.** Identify one area — home, work, church, community — where you've been carrying something alone that was never meant to be yours alone. This week, make the ask. Say the words: "I need help." It doesn't need to be a big conversation. A text is fine. Just make it specific and real.
- **Cross a Generational line.** Seek out a conversation with someone of a different generation. If you're in your 60s, 70s, or later, ask a young person what they dream about, and actually listen. If you're younger, ask a senior what they've learned that they wish they could pass on. Joel said both are needed. Pentecost says they both received the Spirit – let's act like it.
- **Make room for one new person.** Today after worship, introduce yourself to someone you don't know or don't know well. Or invite one person from your neighborhood or workplace to come with you next week. Next Sunday, sit somewhere different. The Spirit is poured out on all flesh. Let's make sure all flesh feels welcome here.
- **Show up for one person.** Think of one person in your life who is running on empty. Don't overthink it; you probably already know who it is. This week don't wait for them to ask. Just show up. Text, drop by, bring food, offer a ride, sit with them. Let them know they are not invisible.

I want you to imagine something with me. What if this congregation — this specific community, in this specific part of Monroe — became known as a place where no one carries it alone?

Where the seniors who think they have nothing left to offer discover that their prayers, their experience, and their wisdom are exactly what the younger generation desperately needs.

Where the young parents who drove past this building a hundred times finally come in — and discover that nobody here expects them to have it together first.

Where we stop being a building where ministry happens to the people in the seats, and start being a community where ministry flows through everyone — sons and daughters, young and old, lifelong members and first-time guests.

That's what Moses was praying for in the wilderness. That's what happened in Jerusalem on Pentecost. That's what God is still inviting us into. You don't have to have it all together. You just have to take one step.

Moses prayed, “I wish all of God's people were prophets.” Pentecost says: they are. You are. Now go live like it.

Let's pray silently.

Holy Spirit, hear us as we share whatever we are carrying alone or where we need to ask help. ... God revealed to us through Jesus and the Spirit, open us to your presence. ... Open us to one another Blow through the locked rooms of our hearts like fresh wind. ...

Remind us that Pentecost was never about a few extraordinary people but about ordinary people filled with your extraordinary Spirit....

Take whatever we bring today and breathe life into them and into us.

We are listening. We are available. Come, Holy Spirit. Amen.