

The Holy Spirit Pt. 1

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[0 : 0 0] This morning we're continuing on in the Gospel of John, and you're welcome to open up there in your Bible. If you have one, or if you don't, you can always use the one in the seat in front of you there.

And this morning we're talking about the Holy Spirit. I don't think we've done a message yet just about the Holy Spirit.

And so I'm glad that we've come to this now in John's Gospel. Probably most of us have questions and wonderings about the Holy Spirit. So we're going to read this morning what Jesus said in John chapter 14.

This is the evening before Jesus' death. Jesus is talking with his disciples. They're still in the upper room where they ate the last supper. And this is what Jesus said to his disciples.

If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever.

[1 : 0 2] The Spirit of Truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him.

For he lives with you and will be in you. Then come down to verse 25. All this I have spoken while still with you.

But the advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

Now let's for a moment just acknowledge some of our thoughts and feelings about the Holy Spirit before we take a closer look at these words of Jesus. For some of us here this morning, you might be thinking, yes, finally, let's talk about the Holy Spirit.

We don't hear about him enough. And of course, apart from him, we can't do anything. Others of you may be thinking, hmm, the Holy Spirit.

[2 : 0 5] I've always wanted to learn more about the Holy Spirit. I read about him in my Bible, but this idea of God's Spirit living in me, it's so strange, so mysterious.

How does it work? Some of you have believed in the Holy Spirit since the day you first were taught about him, and maybe you feel that you just don't feel or sense his presence in you.

And then others of you might say, well, I have no doubt that the Holy Spirit is in me. There's a still small voice inside that keeps calling out to me, reminding me of the truth, convicting me of sin.

Others of you might say, what still small voice? I'm not sure if I've ever heard that. How do you know that it's the Spirit, the Holy Spirit speaking to you, and not just your own thoughts?

Some of you might say, well, I just can't explain it, but I just have this sense, this feeling, this prompting. It must be him. And others might say, well, that's interesting.

[3 : 16] What about the times when that prompting or that feeling seems to have been wrong, and it wasn't true, or it wasn't the right thing to do after all? And so we easily can get all turned around and jumbled up about this thing of the Holy Spirit living in us who believe.

Sometimes it can even lead to doubt and disillusionment. We might wonder, if God's Spirit really lives in me, then why do I still feel so strongly the pull of sin?

Or if God's Spirit really lives in me, why doesn't it feel like it? Shouldn't I be hearing a regular voice speaking to me somewhere deep within?

Some of us hear that, and others of us, for some reason, don't seem to hear that. There's a whole kind of bunch of questions that we have when it comes to the Holy Spirit, and I wish I could answer all of these this morning, but we won't be able to do all of that this morning.

But hopefully, as we consider Jesus' words, we'll get a little bit more clarity and confidence when it comes to the Holy Spirit. So let's look at what Jesus said. If you love me, keep my commands, and I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever, the Spirit of Truth.

[4 : 41] Notice how Jesus refers to this Spirit. He describes him as another advocate, or depending on your Bible translation, another counselor, another helper, another comforter.

We'll come back to that whole discussion in a second. Jesus also calls him the Spirit of Truth. And then talking about this same advocate, again down in verse 26, he refers to this Spirit of Truth as the Holy Spirit, the advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things.

Now this probably sounded strange and mysterious even to the disciples that night. And yet it's not something that they'd never heard about before. If you're familiar with the Old Testament, all of those Hebrew scriptures in the first part of the Bible, the Spirit of God is mentioned all throughout them.

He's referred to, he's described. We'll look at several of those passages quickly. God's Spirit was there at the beginning when the world was created.

When the earth was still formless and empty, it says that the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. Then in the days of the flood, just before it, the Lord said, My Spirit will not contend with man forever.

[6 : 12] There was great wickedness on the earth in those days. Then we fast forward all the way to the days of Moses at Mount Sinai. And it was there that God said that He was going to put His Spirit on Bezalel so that He would have exceptional abilities to do artistic design work on the Ark of the Covenant and the tabernacle.

Around that same time, Numbers 11 verse 17, God told Moses that He would take some of the Spirit that He had given to Moses and put it on the leaders, the elders of Israel.

And just a few verses down in that same passage, verse 25, we read that the Spirit came to rest on these elders and they began to prophesy. They began to speak on God's behalf.

Then we could fast forward to the period of the judges, the leaders of Israel, after they had come into the promised land but before they got their first human king.

And we read again and again through the book of Judges that the Spirit of the Lord or the Spirit of Yahweh came upon these men and even women powerfully. And because of that, they did great and wonderful things to save Israel, to deliver the nation through difficult times.

- [7 : 32] One of the most famous of those judges is of course Samson. Samson received superhuman strength from the Spirit of God and did some pretty awesome things with it, fighting off, it seems, an entire army single-handedly, ripping a lion apart with his bare hands and other things.
- Then we fast forward even further than that to the days of Nehemiah. And he and the people back in his day, they reflected on all the stuff that God had been doing in the history of Israel.
- And this is what they said. They said, the Spirit of the Lord will come powerfully upon you. Oh, that's not... Sorry. I'm jumping ahead. I'm getting ahead of myself here.
- Before Nehemiah came the period of the kings. And God said there, the Spirit of the Lord will come powerfully upon you, referring to Saul, the first human king of Israel.
- And you will prophesy. You'll be changed into a different person. And then we read later that the Spirit of the Lord left from Saul and an evil spirit tormented him.
- [8 : 43] Then after that, we read about how the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David, God's chosen king for Israel. Then we get to Nehemiah.
- Fast forward all the way to Nehemiah. And he reflected back and they acknowledged that it was God's Spirit that was warning the people all those years as the prophets spoke.
- It was God's Spirit who was enabling them to speak God's words to the people and warning them, calling them to turn back to the Lord. Then we come to the poetry of the Bible, the Psalms, the prayers, and the songs.
- And the Spirit of God is mentioned many times there. This is one of David's prayers where he prays and admits to God that there's nowhere that he can hide from him because God's Spirit, his presence, knows no boundaries or limits.
- He can go everywhere. In fact, he is everywhere all at once by his Spirit. As God said through the prophet Jeremiah, do I not fill heaven and earth?
- [9 : 52] declares the Lord. Jeremiah 23, verse 24. And then as we come to the last words of the prophets before Jesus came, there are quite a few prophecies and promises that were made about the Spirit of God.
- Like this one in Isaiah chapter 11, verse 1 and 2. That there would be a special son, a descendant of Jesse, who would have the Spirit of Yahweh rest on him.
- And again, in Isaiah chapter 42, verse 1, there would be a special servant of God, a chosen one. And God would put His Spirit on him and He would bring justice to the nations.
- These promises began to be fulfilled in Jesus. It was John the baptizer who testified. He said, I saw the Spirit of God coming down upon Jesus at Jesus' baptism.
- And then finally, there were several wonderful promises made through the prophets that someday God would pour out His Spirit on all of His people. Perhaps one of the most famous is Joel chapter 2, verse 28.
- [11 : 05] And afterward, I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.
- So all of this is there as kind of a foundation to what Jesus is saying. This is the same Spirit of God that Jesus is referring to. The Holy Spirit, just like David and Isaiah referred to Him, the one who came and brought all sorts of wonderful things to pass all the way from the creation of the world onto the present day.
- This is who Jesus is talking about when He refers to this other advocate, the Spirit of truth. It's the very Spirit of God Himself. Not a new Spirit, not a different Spirit, but the same Holy Spirit of God who has been there moving mysteriously through the ages.

And now, what does Jesus say about this Holy Spirit now? He says, I will ask the Father and He will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever, the Spirit of truth.

The world cannot accept Him because it neither sees Him nor knows Him, but you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you.

[12 : 30] Jesus promises that the disciples will not be left alone. They won't be abandoned. No. Jesus will ask the Father, that's God the Father, and God the Father will give them the Spirit of truth.

And this is just one of those fascinating things that Jesus said. In these two verses alone, we see what we call the triune nature of God.

There's Jesus, the man that's sitting in the room with Him, who we've talked about already is the divine Son of God, the one who claims to be one with the Father.

And He, when He leaves, He's going to ask the Father, that's God the Father, and God is going to send His Spirit, who is also God.

It's God's own Spirit. All three of them are here in just these two verses. Jesus talks about His Father and the Spirit as if they're distinct persons.

[13 : 34] And yet, He also speaks as though there's this mysterious unity between them. I and the Father are one, said Jesus. If you're new to Christianity or to the Bible, this does sound weird.

There's a reason we believe these things, though. It's because this is how God has described Himself. These are the words that He has chosen. This is how Jesus describes God and the Spirit.

In some way, that's beyond our understanding. There's a different kind of being than us. We have some similarities to our Creator, but there are some major differences.

We are all, each one of us, just one person. But God, according to His own Word, is tri-personal.

His fullness is somehow shared by three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit. I mean, how else could Jesus ask the Father to give the Spirit unless He's somehow a distinct person from the Father?

[14 : 42] How else could the Father give the Spirit and the Spirit come from the Father unless the Spirit is somehow distinct from Jesus and the Father? So it is kind of a wild thing that Jesus says here.

Not only is there Father, Son, and Spirit, but Jesus describes some of how they relate to one another. Jesus asks the Father. He talks to the Father.

The Spirit is given by the Father or sent by the Father. It's not Jesus Himself being sent back to the disciples. This is somehow another advocate, another person.

It's no wonder we get all jumbled up and perplexed when we start thinking about the Spirit. I mean, Jesus, we can relate to.

He's visible. He's touchable. He's tangible. He's human. He has all the stuff of humanity like we do. He's like us. But the Spirit, I mean, that's just something that we can't relate to.

[15 : 49] It's outside of our experience. A Spirit, by definition, is, for the most part, a being without a body. And we read in the Bible that there are created spirits like the angels.

We read that there are evil spirits who are fallen angels. We read that there is the spirit of man which refers to that inward part of us that's immaterial.

But then there is the Holy Spirit God's own spirit, the spirit who is unlike any other. And Jesus tells them that this spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, is going to come to them.

He's going to be given to them. And Jesus tells us a couple helpful things about how he will come. Imagine for a moment that you're there in the room among Jesus' disciples, disciples, and Jesus is saying this to you and you're listening and you're wondering, like how will he come?

What should I expect? Is it going to feel all tingly inside? Or will I start prophesying? Or will I get superhuman strength like Samson?

[17 : 09] What's this going to be like? Jesus helps them a little bit with this. He tells them a little of the how. First of all, Jesus says that the Spirit of Truth will be with them and will be in them.

So there's a real sense in which they will not be left alone by Jesus because the Spirit of God will come and he will be with them. And, you know, it's not as though the Spirit of God is just going to kind of hover around near their shoulder wherever they go.

No, it's better than that. It's deeper than that. Jesus says he will be in you, like inside you. The Spirit of God himself will be inside of you.

This might bring to mind some of those stories from the Old Testament where God's Spirit came upon men like Moses or David or Samson. This is going to be the new internal reality for the disciples.

disciples. But then as soon as we think about God's Spirit coming to live in us, maybe we can't help but think about Saul, that first king of Israel, the man who had the Spirit but then lost the Spirit.

[18 : 31] The Spirit of God left him when he started to turn away from the Lord and disobey him. But it's here that we see something very special and unique in what Jesus says.

this isn't going to be like the days of the Old Testament where God's Spirit came and went. When the Spirit of Truth comes to you, he will be with you forever, says Jesus.

Forever. We're talking about something new and wonderful that God is doing here. God's going to give his own Spirit to these men and that Spirit will take up permanent residence inside of them.

This is wonderful news. But still we're probably wondering, well, what will this be like? What will this feel like to have God himself living in me?

God's own Spirit. Well, Jesus tells us a little bit more, but not from our perspective what it will look like, but what it will look like from the world's perspective.

[19 : 36] Verse 17, he says, the world cannot accept him, that's the Spirit of truth, because it neither sees him nor knows him, but you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

I find this so helpful. Jesus says that the world does not see the Spirit. The Spirit. So the Spirit of God will come upon these men, but from the world's perspective, the people of the world, they won't see the Spirit of God.

He'll be invisible to them. It's not like the disciples will have a new and permanent glow on all their skin that's showing that the Spirit lives in them, or that their eyes will suddenly shine like little flashlights because the Spirit has taken up residence in them.

It's not like their bodies will somehow weigh 15 pounds more than they look like they should because the Spirit is in them. I mean, a little later in the story, the disciples will see the Spirit come down at Pentecost upon them in the upper room, but the world isn't there.

The world doesn't see it happen. And there were some real and tangible effects of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The disciples began speaking in other languages and preaching the good news of Jesus, and later on went on to do signs and miracles and wonders.

[21 : 07] But what did the world see? They saw ordinary men come out of the house. To some, they were just a bunch of loony bins who had had too much to drink.

To others, oh, there's those men of Galilee spreading the cult of Jesus. To still others, yeah, those guys are a bunch of professional swindlers peddling a bunch of lies, or street performers, magicians, that Jesus was executed a month ago.

Why should we believe them? Well, this verse helps me understand it. The world cannot accept him because it neither sees him nor knows him.

There's a very real sense in which something will be different about the disciples and the world around them will not understand it. Jesus says they won't understand it because they can't see him.

He'll be invisible, undetectable. They won't understand it because they don't know him. And this is a sad thing, but in another sense I find this comforting because it tells me that it's okay for the world to look at us and think that we're weird when we talk about the Holy Spirit of God living in us.

[22 : 38] The reality is that the disciples and all true believers, we will know that we have a relationship with the living God. We will know that he lives in us, that his spirit is there with us, and the world will have a hard time with this, says Jesus, because they can't see him, and they don't know him.

You could take a Christian's body, you could run all the scientific and medical tests you want on it, and the results will come back the same every time as if we were any other human being in the world. The spirit of God in us cannot be seen or detected like that.

He's invisible. He's spirit. He's not flesh or bone or material. how he interacts with us inside here.

It's beyond what science or psychology can tell. But Jesus assures us the spirit of truth will be with you and he will be in you.

It'll be a spiritual reality that's just unseen, unappreciated, unaccepted by the world. well let's come back for a moment to this description of the spirit.

[23 : 59] Another advocate says Jesus. I will ask the father and he will give you another advocate that he may be with you forever.

This is another one of those places where there's debate about how to properly translate the word from the Greek language that the New Testament was written in. So depending on the translation that you have in front of you, it might say something different.

It's either advocate or comforter or counselor or helper.

There's even a couple translators out there who look at this word and say, well there's just no English equivalent to it. So let's just transliterate it directly from Greek right into English, just like we did with baptism.

I will ask the Father and he will give you another paraclete. Well when I look at that I kind of laugh because paraclete just doesn't mean anything to any of us, does it?

[25 : 02] So why all the different translations here? Apparently in Greek literature outside the Bible this word was used to refer to a legal assistant or legal advocate.

So some go with advocate. others are just not so sure that Jesus is really picking up on that specific legal usage of the word and so they look more at the verb form of this word which kind of means to call alongside, to encourage, to exhort.

And so some translations go with counselor, comforter, helper, all of which relate to that idea. the problem with all of these words is that they carry baggage for us today in English.

As Don Carson says, the first thing that comes to mind when we hear comforter is a quilt or maybe somebody who's handing out Kleenex boxes at a funeral.

Helper, that's pretty good, but for some reason in English when we hear helper we often think of someone who's inferior. Somebody who's kind of there but not really in charge, not really just kind of doing what we need a little bit of help with.

[26 : 26] Counselor seems to have a lot of merit to it but probably we shouldn't think of the Holy Spirit as like the school guidance counselor or a marriage counselor.

And even though some think that the legal overtones of advocate hit it just right, that word advocate just kind of leaves us feeling cold or like we're in trouble.

He's more than just a legal consultant or a defense attorney that's giving us advice about how to answer the charges being laid against us. So this is my way to understand this word.

Hopefully this is helpful to you. I simply like to take the word right out and just read the context to see what is he getting at? I will ask the father and he will give you another blank that he may be with you forever.

At the bottom of all this what has Jesus been telling them? He's been telling them that he is leaving them but now he's assuring them that they will not be abandoned.

[27 : 38] They will not be left all alone. Part of that assurance comes in verse 18 when Jesus says I'm going to come back. But in the meantime the other part of that assurance is that they will not be left alone while he's gone.

Jesus will ask the father and the father will send another blank to be with them. again in verse 25 and 26 what's the concern?

Jesus says all this I have spoken while still with you but the blank the holy spirit whom the father will send in my name will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

What's the concern? Jesus is leaving and with Jesus going also goes all of that guidance and instruction that he's been giving.

All of the words that he's been speaking to them from God that help. But Jesus says you will not be left without that guidance and instruction.

[28 : 44] You will not be left without God's word because the blank the holy spirit will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you.

So this is how I get at the meaning of the word. The holy spirit is another of the thing that Jesus has been for his disciples.

He will do what Jesus did for the disciples. Just like Jesus taught them and encouraged them and warned them and gave instruction to them and helped them figure out how to think about all sorts of things.

Different situations, different worries in life. In Jesus' absence, the spirit of truth will be with them and do the same thing. He will be to them a counselor, just as Jesus has been a counselor to them.

He will be to them a comforter, just as Jesus has been a comforter. He will be to them a helping guide and a shepherd, just like Jesus has been to them a helping guide and shepherd.

[29 : 52] word. I mean, this is good news for the disciples, isn't it? Some of these men are going to sit down and write these gospel accounts out for the whole world to read for the next 2,000 years.

And what if they can't remember how Jesus said that thing? Like, what was the word that Jesus used that one time? the Holy Spirit will remind you of everything I have said to you.

This is wonderful. He will teach you all things, says Jesus. Everything else that God wants you to know, don't worry about it.

The Holy Spirit will be there in my place, and he will teach it to you. This is wonderful. This is a beautiful thing about the Holy Spirit.

It's as though Jesus will continue to be with the disciples. Things will continue to go as they have gone, but instead of Jesus being with them in the flesh, like walking around beside them, now Jesus and the Father will be with them through the Spirit who comes to live in each one of them.

[31 : 14] All the things that Jesus has been providing them, the Holy Spirit of God will continue to provide for them so that they can do the work that God has given them to do, and that they can play the role that God has given them to play in his story.

Now I'm out of time for this morning, and we haven't even hardly got to the things that we're all wondering about. The things like, well that's what Jesus said to them, but what about the rest of us? What about all believers?

Do we get the Holy Spirit living in us like that? Working in us like that? I'm going to tell you to come back next week.

We're going to continue on this topic, because we haven't talked a lot about it as a church. Hopefully we'll get to some fuller and clearer answers to that question of how the Holy Spirit lives in us and works in all of us who belong to Jesus.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, we thank you for your spirit. We thank you that you live in us, that we're not left alone.

[32 : 32] We don't have to figure out all this life by ourselves. We thank you that you convict us of sin, that you call us back to you again and again. We thank you that you remind us of the truth.

We thank you that you open our eyes up to see what's really going on. We thank you that you give us life where there was deadness in our souls.

I pray that we would all go on the journey together and understand more and more of your Holy Spirit, this wonderful gift that you've given us. We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.