

**HOLY SPIRIT** – Joint series in SFK and NN

**John 14:14-16**

*“If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.*

TRUE or FALSE Christmas Quiz.

*The Bible says Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem because of a decree by Caesar Augustus.*

*TRUE - Luke 2:1-5.*

*The Bible says Mary rode a donkey from Nazareth to Bethlehem.*

*FALSE - A donkey does not appear anywhere in the Biblical account. She likely walked.*

*Ask a heavily pregnant woman if she'd like to ride a donkey??!!*

*The OT prophet Micah foretold that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem*

*TRUE - The prophet Micah prophesied that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem, five hundred years before the event.*

*The Bible says that the wise men found Jesus lying in a manger in the town of Bethlehem:*

*FALSE - Jesus was in a house by this time (Matthew 2:11). Probably two years old.*

*The Bible says that there were three wise men:*

*FALSE – The Bible only mentions the three gifts.*

We could go on and on... there was no drummer boy, Mary probably didn't give birth the night they arrived, the angels didn't sing, etc.

But sometimes tradition blurs what's actually in the text.

And I share all this because Lifeway research conducted surveys with over 3000 people to examine the State of Theology in the United States. They wanted to know what Americans “believe about God, salvation, ethics, and the Bible.”

Among many other things the survey found:

78% of people thought that Jesus was the first and greatest being created by God the Father

*FALSE* – he's eternally coexisted with the Father.

59% of people considered the Holy Spirit to be a force, not a personal being

*FALSE*

These beliefs certainly don't line up with the Bible.

But they are also fruit of a reality of our faith: ***The Trinity is hard to make sense of!***

Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each eternal. Equal. Yet distinct. Each is a “He” and can say “I.”

Yet they are one.

But the more we try to rationalize and make sense of it, the more heretical we tend to get...

***The trinity is like water - ice, liquid and vapor.***

That's Modalism- the heresy of old that God isn't three different persons, he just reveals himself in three different forms. This heresy was condemned as early as the 4th century.

***The trinity is like the sun - the star, the heat, and the light that come from it.***

That's the heresy of Arianism, that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are creations of the father and not one in nature with him.

***The trinity is like a three leaf clover***

That's Partialism, the assertion that the three members of the Trinity are parts of God, rather than three distinct persons within it.

**The Trinity is a mystery.**

Some write it off because it's illogical.

Others try to rationalize it and become heretical.

**Eugene Peterson** - *Mystery is not the absence of meaning, but the presence of more meaning than we can comprehend*

The cry of enlightenment is we can figure it out.

We can know what's going on. If we can't, it lacks tangible value.

This leads to disenchantment – no mystery. No awe. No wonder.

And – over time – it cripples our worship of a transcendent God.

Mysteries of God shouldn't cause me to shut down.

They should cause me to worship all the more his infinite grandeur with more meaning than I can comprehend.

Ultimately - it is natural that we won't understand the supernatural.

It makes sense that God won't make sense.

**C.S. LEWIS** – *Reality, in fact, is usually something you could not have guessed. That is one of the reasons I believe Christianity. It is a religion you could not have guessed. If it offered us just the kind of universe we had always expected, I should feel we were making it up. But, in fact, it is not the sort of thing anyone would have made up. It has just that queer twist about it that real things have.*

**Acts 19:1-7** - The people in Ephesus didn't even know there WAS a Holy Spirit.

And yet Paul baptized them in the Spirit.

Yet in **Acts 7:51** Stephen condemns the religious leaders and accuses them of “always resisting the Holy Spirit.”

What do we see highlighted in the book of Acts:

*It's OK if the Holy Spirit remains a bit of a mystery.*

*It's not OK if he's **unwanted**.*

We serve a generous and good God - **Any gift from God is a gift you want.**

And I may not understand everything, but whatever God has for me, I want all of it...

While we're on this idea of gifts, imagine you get this **ACTION FIGURE**

You get this as a kid and what do you do? You rip the packaging open and get to playing with it.

I have hundreds of Star Wars action figures from my childhood. They're opened, beat up & worn

If I instead had treated them as collector's items and never opened them- they'd be worth

thousands. But who does that? Maybe a collector. But certainly not a child!

Or imagine getting all your presents as a kid. You unwrap the wrapping paper, you put them in a pile. And then you look at them. You admire them. You even feel gratitude for them. But you never open them to enjoy them.

The gifts are *admired*, but never fully *experienced*.

This is what we often do with Jesus Christ.

We treat him more like a collector than a kid – a child of God.

Don't get me wrong. We receive Him. We receive salvation. And we admire the life he lived.

We're grateful that he lived a perfect and holy life and died as a sacrifice for us.

But we never receive that life for ourselves.

In the end Jesus is admired, but the life He lived is never experienced.

***The Holy Spirit wants to help you not only admire the life of Jesus, but unwrap it and experience it for ourselves.***

Consider this:

***It is possible to have a saved soul but a wasted life.***

Don't just admire the life Jesus lived. Experience it.

***It is possible to have Christian ideas in your head without power in your heart.***

I'd contend that we don't walk in the life Christ has for us because we've forsaken the H. Spirit

2 Corinthians 3:17 – *“where the spirit of the LORD is, there is freedom.”*

2 Cor 3:18 (MSG) – *“We are transfigured much like the Messiah, our lives gradually becoming brighter and more beautiful as God enters our lives and we become like Him.”*

Could it be we aren't experiencing the gift, the life of Jesus Christ available to us, because we're largely indifferent to the person of the Holy Spirit.

**Andrew Murray** – the 19<sup>th</sup> century minister and author of some 200 books, once said:

*“All that in the Old Covenant had been promised by God, all that had been manifested and brought nigh to us of Divine grace in Jesus, the Holy Spirit is now to make our very own.*

*Through Him all the promises of God are fulfilled, all grace and salvation in Christ become a personal possession and experience.”*

The Holy Spirit wants to help you not only admire the gift of the life of Jesus, but unwrap it and possess it and experience it for ourselves.

**Billy Graham** – *“I am convinced that to be filled with the Spirit is not an option, but a necessity. It is indispensable for the abundant life and for fruitful service. The Spirit-filled life is not abnormal; it is the normal Christian life. Anything less is subnormal; it is less than what God wants and provides for his children. Therefore, to be filled with the Spirit should never be thought of as an unusual or unique experience for, or known by, only a select few. It is intended for all, needed by all, and available to all. That is why the Scripture commands all of us, “Be filled with the Spirit.”*

## **JOHN 7:37**

*On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, "Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.'" (When he said "living water," he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him...)*

This was a massive religious festival. If it was in Hampton Roads in our day, we probably would have been in attendance. He's saying look it's good that you know how to worship and you know my Word. But do you know my Spirit?

## **Do YOU?**

I want to unwrap this gift as a church family this Christmas.

I think it's important when examining the Holy Spirit to look at the gifts, the fruits, the function.

But I think it's most important to start with **THE PERSON – who**

It's a mistake we make when we try to understand his work and power before we understand WHO He is.

I want to look at three aspects of the Holy Spirit – His personality. His history. His work

## **PERSONALITY**

He has a mind (Romans 8:27) // He has a will (1 Corinthians 12:11) // He has emotions (Romans 15:30, Galatians 5:11) // He can be made to feel sorrow (Ephesians 4:30) // He can be insulted (Hebrews 10:29) // He can be resisted (Acts 7:51) // He can be lied to (Acts 5:1-11) // He comforts (Acts 9:31) // He speaks (Hebrews 3:7) // He teaches (1 Corinthians 2:13)

## **AW Tozer -**

*"The Holy Spirit is a person, He is not enthusiasm. He is not courage. He is not energy. He is not the personification of all good qualities, like Jack Frost is the personification of cold weather. Actually, the Holy Spirit is not the personification of anything. He is a Person, the same way you are a person, but not material substance. He has individuality. He is one being and not another. He has will and intelligence... He has knowledge and sympathy and ability to love and see and think. He can hear, speak, desire, grieve and rejoice. He is a Person."*

Bottom line: the Holy Spirit is not an IT. He is not some force.

The Holy Spirit isn't a **product for show**, he's not a **power to wield**, he's a **person to know**.

If the Holy Spirit were a force, our focus would be **lust** for more: **"how can I have more of it?"**

But since He's a person the proper perspective is **love**: **"how can I give more of myself to Him?"**

If we seek the Holy Spirit merely for our own power or benefit or comfort, relationship will be elusive. The Holy Spirit's passion is the benefit and glory of the Lord Jesus, not ours.

The prophet Amos asked in the OT : **"Can two walk together except they be agreed?"**

## ***HISTORY***

Each person we pass has a history. Getting to know their history is to get to know the person.

**St. Basil the Great** once said: *He co-existed with the Father and Son before the ages. Even if you can imagine anything beyond the ages, you will discover that the Spirit is even further beyond.*”

But the Holy Spirit’s history within the Bible powerfully informs us about who the Holy Spirit is, and who He is to us right now.

He’s present as far back as Creation.

And as you continue in the Old Testament, the H.S. makes appearances.

Under the Old Covenant in the Old Testament God would send the Holy Spirit for a specific mission that required endurance and power.

***“The Spirit of the Lord came upon”***

*(i.e. Samson ... took on a lion. Took on 10000 Philistines with a donkey’s jawbone)*

After that mission was over, the Holy Spirit left.

The Holy Spirit’s empowerment in the Old Testament and Old Covenant was temporary and for the need of the moment. It was temporary. It was external.

It’s why we see in Psalms David praying *“Don’t take your spirit from me.”*

Some centuries later the disciples had the same emotions about Jesus.

He had predicted his betrayal. He had spoken of his coming sacrifice.

This was troubling. They couldn’t imagine life without Him. They didn’t want to.

But Jesus didn’t just promise that they would one day join Him in Heaven.

He made a second promise:

In **John 14:16** Jesus is talking about the Holy Spirit when He says:

***And I will pray to the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever***

The Holy Spirit is **internal**.

- This is what Jesus spoke of when he said “ABIDE”
- Paul makes this even more clear when he calls us temples of the Holy Spirit in 1 Cor 6:19, or he says in Romans 8:9 that “the Spirit of God dwells in us.”

The Holy Spirit is **permanent**.

- Abide in the Greek means to stay in a given place. To continue. To dwell.
- Jesus said he would send the Holy Spirit, who would abide FOREVER.

The Holy Spirit doesn’t come upon us. He doesn’t come alongside us.

The Holy Spirit moves within us and through us.

**Ephesians 1** – when you believed in Christ he gave you the Holy Spirit... the deposit of God.

**Ephesians 5** – be filled with the Holy Spirit... not contradicting himself.

It’s both. He’s there at our first spiritual breath. We need to continue breathing.

We can’t treat him as temporary or a tool to be used now and again.

## **WORK**

After meeting somebody for the first time and we're breaking the ice, it's usually not long before we ask them – what do you do?

**Helper** – John 14:26

*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*

**Advocate** – John 16:8

*Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me;*

**Comforter** – Acts 9:31

*Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.*

**Guide** – John 16:13

*when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth*

The Holy Spirit doesn't operate in all of these ways so we can stagnate.

He does it so we can operate on a whole new level.

**John 14:12** – *Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.*

How can He say that?

Because in His next breath He promises that when He goes to the Father, He will ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 1:8** -

**Ephesians 3:20** – *[God] is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.*

If I were the enemy of God, my chief strategy would be to create a disconnect between the Church and the Holy Spirit. To unplug the Church from His power.

If I could get the church to operate in its own human strength and power, it will only get human results. A church that's reliant on human strength quickly becomes irrelevant.

AW Tozer said: *“We may as well face it: the whole level of spirituality among us is low. We have measured ourselves by ourselves until the incentive to seek higher plateaus in the things of the Spirit is all but gone... (We) have imitated the world, sought popular favor, manufactured delights to substitute for the joy of the Lord and produced a cheap and synthetic power to substitute for the power of the Holy Ghost.”*

Again, in John 7 Jesus says it's good that you know how to worship and you know my Word.  
But do you know my Spirit?

### **Do you?**

Do you feel like something is missing in your walk with Christ?  
Could it be that it's not a something- it's a *someone*?

You don't need more understanding of the Holy Spirit in your mind,  
you need more experience of His presence in your life.

Paul closes 2 Corinthians with the words:

***"The Communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all."***

Listen to these words that this word communion in the Greek is defined by:

*Fellowship. Companionship. Communication. Intimacy. Sharing Together. Partnership. Close mutual association. Camaraderie.*

Does that describe your relationship with the Holy Spirit?  
It's available to you.

***"Speaking terms."*** Relationships take communication. Practice time in His presence.  
Practice time in God's word. Time talking and listening. Thanking. Singing. Sitting in silence.

Don't just admire the life of Jesus this Christmas.  
Let the Holy Spirit let you open it and experience it.