

- In our current teaching series, we are reviewing the foundations of what we believe as Christ-followers because **HOW I RESPOND TO LIFE IS DETERMINED BY WHAT I BELIEVE.**
 - We've looked at God the Father.
 - We spent 3 weeks examining the different aspects of God the Son, looking at Jesus birth, life, death and last week the resurrection.
 - But what about that third part of the Trinity?
 - "We believe in the Holy Spirit"
 - We believe in him. He is significant. Yet we don't often know what to do or believe about the Holy Spirit. We don't talk about him much. We're not sure what or who he is or what he does.
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- Many of you drive the same route to work, school or other things every single day?
 - You get up, you get ready and you get in the car and you drive. You get to the end of your street and turn left and off you go.
 - There are days you are halfway to work and you suddenly wonder how you got to where you are – you don't remember any of it?
 - In fact, it gets so routine, that sometimes when we are driving on weekends and we know we want to go to the store to the right, our hands automatically make the left.
 - What happens when life becomes like this? It's the same path. Home to work. Work to home. Watch a program. Do the chores.
 - While there is nothing wrong with routine, sometimes our life following Jesus begins to take on that kind of routine.
 - Go from house to church. Sing a few songs. Listen to the same old Bible. Smile at a few friends. Go home. Struggle with the same old sins. Ask for forgiveness again. Try to be a good person.
 - When Jesus spoke of giving us life, he wasn't talking about a kind of boring empty existence. Jesus did not come into this world, live, and die so we could follow a few rituals, observe a few holidays, obey a few commandments, and be productive robots.
 - Jesus once told those around him this:
"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Rivers of living water will brim and spill out of the depths of anyone who believes in me this way, just as the Scripture says" (John 7:37-38).
 - Refreshing, overflowing, life-giving, satisfying, thirst-quenching, powerful, a whitewater rafting rush. How?
"By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified" (John 7:39).
 - It comes through the Holy Spirit.
 - The truth is that every one of us who embrace Jesus Christ receive the Holy Spirit - the very presence of God in our lives. The problem all too often is that we don't recognize or acknowledge Him. Instead, we act as though Jesus did all the work to forgive us and now it is our job to try hard and be good. The life of following Jesus is all up to me.
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- So we too often go through life, submitting to routine, never going beyond it, thinking that perhaps there is supposed to be more, but not sure how to get it.
 - **THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE POWER FOR A TRANSFORMED LIFE.**
 - Before we can talk about what it means to believe in the Holy Spirit, we need to understand who he is a bit better.

I. De-mystifying the Holy Spirit.

- The very term “Spirit” seems to make him at times unreal. We have older terms like “Holy Ghost” that do nothing to help clarify. You may have heard we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Does that mean I need to speak in tongues (whatever that means)? Is he all weird or something? I’ve heard people talk about not getting to carried away with all that “Holy Spirit stuff.” What?

A. He is fully God.

- The Spirit is God. He is as much God as the Father or Jesus. He is not God’s essence. He is not the manifestation of God. One religion says that the Holy Spirit is God projecting his force into the world. No. He is God.

- He has all the attributes of God. For example:

Hebrews 9:14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

- He is eternal. We are also told he is utterly holy, that he is all powerful, all knowing, and is everywhere. These are all attributes of God.
- The Spirit is not new. He was active throughout the story of God. From relatively unknowns like Bezalel to more famous people like Joshua, Samson, Nehemiah and David, the Spirit was there. He was even there at creation.

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

B. He is a person, not a “force.”

- There are many who say that the Spirit is some impersonal force. He is like the force. It is everywhere and in everything.
- The Spirit is as individual as God the Father or Jesus the Son.
- He possesses will, intellect and emotions.

Ephesians 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

- You cannot grieve a force. You can only grieve a person.

Acts 5:3 Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?”

- You cannot lie to a force. You can lie to a person.
- This is hugely important, because that means that the Holy Spirit is relational.
- We sing a song “Holy Spirit you are welcome here” because we want him to be with us.

C. We can only know him in relationship.

- To know the Holy Spirit is to be in relationship with him.
- He was an integral part of Jesus’ life on earth. Mary was pregnant through the Spirit’s power. He was there when Jesus was baptized. Jesus was led by the Spirit. He drove out demons by the Spirit. When he left, he promised the Holy Spirit to us.

John 14:16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever – 17 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.

- We can pray to Holy Spirit. He speaks to us. He loves us. He knows us and our circumstances. So why is belief in the Holy Spirit part of the foundation of what we believe?

II. He is the great disciple maker.

- He is the one who changes and transforms us.

A. He brings people to Jesus.

- The process of his involvement begins from before we ever knew him or knew we needed him.

- He convicts of sin.

John 16:7 But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 8 When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment.

- When someone finally has that “aha” moment when they realize how messed up their life is, or how much they need someone else, or how they cannot do life on their own, or how there is some gap or emptiness that they cannot fill – that is the Holy Spirit.
- If you want to know where the Spirit is working, just listen to the people around you, to their stories, to what is missing and what they are saying. That is where the Spirit is at work.
- He is the only reason we ever come to know God. Without him, we have no shot.

B. He regenerates them.

- He gives us a new heart. He makes us a new creation.

John 3:3 Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.” 4 “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!” 5 Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

- He comes to live in us. He is ours. Ezekiel described it as removing our heart of stone and giving us a heart of flesh and putting the Spirit in us.
- When we are told that coming to Jesus makes us a new creation, the Spirit is the one who makes us that new creation. He transforms us. That is the work of the Holy Spirit.
- He is the agent of our regeneration. He lives in us. We have the God of the universe living with us when we come to follow Jesus.
- **THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE POWER FOR A TRANSFORMED LIFE.**

C. He walks with and transforms those who are willing.

- We receive the Holy Spirit when we come to accept Jesus.
- The Holy Spirit lives in us. God in us. He makes his home in us. (Some people refer to this as the baptism of the Holy Spirit)

Romans 8:9 You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.

- The Spirit living in us does many things.
- He gives us guidance. (John 16:7-11) He directs decisions, words and actions.
- He helps us to speak rightly. (Eph 5:18-19) We have little trouble using sarcasm, criticism, gossip, slander, angry words, etc. We need help to encourage, build up, compliment and help.
- He enables true worship. (John 4:24) We can sing without worshiping. He helps us.
- He is who makes me joyful. (Acts 13:52, 1 Thes 1:6)
- He helps me break free from habitual sin (Rom 8:2, Gal 5:16)
- He helps me understand things. (1 Corinthians 2:12-16) He teaches me.

- He helps us really know and understand God. (John 15:26)
- He counsels me. (John 16:13) He is advising and directing and helping us.
- He changes me and enables me to be like Jesus. (Gal 5:22-23)
- Gives me power. (Acts 2-28) He does things through me I couldn't do alone. He helps me make a difference in the world. To operate supernaturally.
- He gives us gifts. (1 Corinthians 12:3-8) He gives us supernatural empowerments.
- He calls us to new levels of freedom, holiness, surrender and commitment. (1 Thes 5:23-24) Without guilt, shame, or holding onto past hurts.
- So why does my life often not look like this?

III. Engaging with the Holy Spirit is an ongoing choice.

- People live empty lives because they have stopped at having him. They have the Holy Spirit, but are not filled with the Holy Spirit. He is relegated to a corner of our lives.
- *"Satan's main strategy with God's people has always been to whisper, 'Don't call, don't ask, don't depend on God to do great things. You'll get along fine if you just rely on your own cleverness and energy.'"* (Jim Cymbala, Fresh Wind Fresh Fire)
- How do we live such that the Spirit walks with us and continues to help us?
- Paul, when writing to the church that he started in Ephesus, said it this way:
Ephesians 5:18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- If we already have the Spirit, then why are we told to be filled with the Spirit? There is something different about allowing the Holy Spirit to fill us up completely.
- The word is an active voice, which means this is an ongoing filling, not a onetime thing. It is to be regular and perpetual. If we want to be filled, we must:

A. We must desire to be filled.

- We need to be captivated by him.
- When you meet someone that you fall in love with. They occupy your thinking at all times of the day. You think of ways to communicate, to surprise them, to serve them, to be with them. You sign your name, you leave notes. You are increasingly captivated by them.
- When we are filled, we are motivated by him. We need to be hungry – do I want to be filled.
- Do we desire that kind of presence of God?

B. Surrender control to Him.

- We are told to be filled, but we have to allow him to fill us. We don't do the filling.
- It is an issue of control. It's not formulaic. Those of you whose minds go this way, this is not a two-step formula to living rightly. Remember, this is a relationship.
- To be filled by the Spirit is to be controlled by the Spirit.
- *If I'm keeping secrets from God - harboring unconfessed sin - then I'm not allowing him to fill me. Every moment I stubbornly refuse to admit my faults, I forfeit the power, the filling of the Spirit, I sacrifice the reality of God's presence in my life.*
- *If I refuse to accept what God clearly states in the Bible, then I'm still holding onto authority. It is I who determine what's right and wrong, not God. Thus, I will not be filled with the Spirit.*
- *If I don't set aside time with God every day, I probably will not be wrestling with what the Spirit wants me to face. I avoid His voice and void His power. I hold onto my schedule for my things and consequently will not be filled.*

- *If I know God wants me to do something (ministry, talk to someone, giving), but I balk and balk and hesitate and procrastinate and let other things take priority. I'm still holding onto control. No filling. No power, but my own.*
- Comes down to this - If God told you to do something, would you?
- The Spirit-filled life begins the moment we are thoroughly convinced that we can do nothing apart from the indwelling strength of the Holy Spirit. Not when we SAY we are convinced, but when we ARE convinced. Until we embrace that simple truth and grip the Holy Spirit, we will not experience the full-blown power of God . . . because we will out there doing things for God in our own strength.
- We cannot become like Jesus, we cannot experience freedom, we cannot have God's power without the Holy Spirit.

- You see, many Christians are so accustomed to auto pilot that they don't want to change things. It's too radical and scary. They like the comfortable pseudo Christian life they live. It's safe and predictable. No risks. Basically they're good people, but void of any supernatural involvement. Until Gods sends a storm and knock out the lights.
- *"Every time we say, 'I believe in the Holy Spirit.' We mean that we believe that there is a living God able and willing to enter human personality and change it."* (J.B. Phillips)
- A God who lives in us.
- A God who is speaking.
- A God who desires freedom for us.
- A God who will challenge us into daring things we might never do otherwise.
- A God of power who wants that power to flow through us.
- And here is the rub. If we think of giving up control to him and doing what he says, how he says it and when he says it and we believe that this is not a desirable end, then we don't really know fully who God is.
- The Holy Spirit will upset the cart of your life because he will move you and make you walk forward. But it is always, always worth it.

- [PRAYER]
- I know that I am not always controlled by your Holy Spirit. My own flesh and desires take over. Would you please come into my life and take full control. Unless you come in and take over I am useless and without hope. I have tried to be a Christian, to be a witness, a worker, an apologist and persuader but it doesn't work. I need you to come and take over. Give me a hunger for you. Build it in me even if now it is absent.
- Holy Spirit, I yield to whatever you determine to accomplish in my life. I give my thoughts, my talents, my abilities, my motivations, my health, my possessions, my all, everything to you without reservation or protection, design or self-determination. Do with me as you will, You are the potter, I am the clay.
- I believe that you will do what you have promised to do. I accept your promise that you will do what you long to see accomplished in your children's lives. I accept your strength for my weakness, your fullness for my emptiness, your will for my indecision, your values spending time, energy, money and influence, your passion in what I love to do, your wisdom in my counsel and your understanding in my judgements.
- Thank you for your presence and power. Amen.