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1 Corinthians 6:19, 12:4-11

What We Believe: The Holy Spirit

Jonathan M. Romig
CornerstoneWestford.com

Next week I'm going to our denomination's (4Cs) annual conference in Pittsburgh, so I asked Bernie to preach. I gave him two options. Option A. The Holy Spirit. Option B. Satan. Bernie chose Satan. I was hoping he would choose the Holy Spirit because I'm more afraid to preach on the Spirit than on Satan.

Because of this I've done more reading than I usually do. I read a whole book, Forgotten God by Francis Chan, I read a chapter of Delighting in the Trinity by Michael Reeves, I read several articles from Preaching Today about preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit, and I listened to a chapter on the Holy Spirit in Know What You Believe by Paul Little, not once, but twice. I studied all these resources because I wanted to sit at the feet of others who seem to understand the Holy Spirit better than me. So I'll be drawing on them as I preach, and I encourage you to check them out if you're a little afraid of the Spirit too.

Francis Chan's second chapter in Forgotten God is, "What are you afraid of?" As I thought about that, I realized I'm afraid to get the Holy Spirit wrong. I want to know the Holy Spirit, but I don't want to **make up** what he's telling me to do. I didn't grow up in a **church** that emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit. We talked a lot about Jesus and the Bible, and the Holy Spirit was important, but we seemed wary of the gifts of the Spirit, the charismatic movement, speaking in tongues, miracles, etc. That's a different church. Who are we going to be? Are we going to be a place that is wary of the Holy Spirit, or will we embrace him?

We don't want to get the Holy Spirit wrong, but we also desperately need him. Without him, we won't succeed as a new church or as Christians. Because the Holy Spirit can be difficult, I want to make it real simple. Let's talk about his **person** (who he is), his **work** (what he does), and our **response** (what we do).

Person: Who is the Holy Spirit?

According to Paul Little, "Both the Hebrew and Greek words translated 'spirit' mean basically 'breath' or 'wind'...", which signifies his life-giving power to all living creatures. Elsewhere he's compared to "oil, fire and water"¹ and in Genesis 1:2 and Matthew 3:16 he's likened to a bird. So what is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is God.

Our **Article of Faith** on the Holy Spirit begins, "We believe in the Holy Spirit who comes forth from the Father and the Son..." The Holy Spirit is just as much God as the Father and the Son. The clearest example we see of this teaching appears in the story of **Ananias** and **Sapphira** at the beginning of the New Testament church. Ananias and Sapphira sold a piece of land, kept some of the money, and gave the rest to the early church, but lied that it was all of the money. Notice two parallel sentences where they are accused of lying to the Holy Spirit, who is then called God.

Acts 5:3-4 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? Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? *You have not lied just to human beings but to God.*" (NIV®)

¹ Little, Paul E.. *Know What You Believe* (p. 112). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

All Scriptures are quoted from the New International Version (NIV®) unless otherwise noted.

When Ananias and Sapphira sinned against the Holy Spirit, they sinned against God. *The Holy Spirit is God.*

Just by being called “the Holy Spirit,” I think it’s easy to confuse who the Holy Spirit is. **LifeWay** just published a recent survey that asked if the respondents agreed with this statement, “The Holy Spirit is a force, not a personal being.” Let’s take a little **survey**. Let’s all close our eyes. If you think the Holy Spirit is a force, not a personal being, raise your hand. Okay, if you think the Holy Spirit is a personal being, raise your hand. Great! Everyone but Bernie got the right answer. **51%** of those that answered the study, said they thought the Holy Spirit is a force, not a personal being. **7%** weren’t sure, maybe that’s you if you raised your hand. And only **42%** affirmed that the Spirit is a person, which is the correct answer. If you got this wrong, no need to feel embarrassed, today you can learn the Holy Spirit is a real true person.

The Holy Spirit is a person (not a force).

The **Jehovah’s Witnesses** believe the Holy Spirit is a force, but the Holy Spirit is not an “it” but a “he” (John 14:17). He is not something, but someone. The Holy Spirit has mind, feelings, and a will.

(Mind) 1 Corinthians 2:10b-11 ...The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For *who knows a person’s thoughts except their own spirit* within them? In the same way *no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.* (NIV®)

(Feelings) Ephesians 4:30 And do not *grieve the Holy Spirit* of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (NIV®)

(Will) 1 Corinthians 12:11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, *just as he determines.* (NIV®)

Elsewhere, we find the Holy Spirit helps, speaks, teaches, witnesses, searches, intercedes, comforts, and more (John 14:16, Acts 1:16, John 14:26, 15:26, 1 Cor 2:10, Rom 8:26).² These are all things a person does.

If you came here imagining the Holy Spirit to be like the **force** in **Star Wars**, I don’t blame you. In the Star Wars, the holy men, the **Jedi**, have the amazing ability to move things, control minds, and fight battles, all with an invisible force (or what George Lucas calls **midi-chlorians**). The Holy Spirit is not an invisible force we can control through prayer or living a holy life. He is the God of the universe and master of all. I want to **confess** I often try to use the Holy Spirit to my own ends. Almost every week, when I pray for my sermon, I struggle between wanting the Holy Spirit to show up so I can look good, and wanting him to come to impact us with God’s word. How do you try to use him for your ends? The Holy Spirit has his own agenda and purposes and won’t be controlled by us, which brings me to his works.

Work: What does the Holy Spirit do?

Most of our **Article of Faith** is not about who the Holy Spirit is, but what he does. Because of this, I want to read the whole article all at once. Notice all the different things he does.

The Holy Spirit: We believe in the Holy Spirit who comes forth from the Father and the Son to convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. The Holy Spirit regenerates, dwells within, sanctifies, teaches, empowers for service, intercedes, and comforts all who believe in Jesus Christ.

It speaks about him convicting of sin and righteousness, and also *regenerating*. What does that mean?

² See *Know What You Believe* and ESV Reformation Study Bible, *The Holy Spirit*. Page 1542.

He gives spiritual life and sanctifies.

You and I are born in sin. Sin isn't just something we do. It starts in our hearts and minds, so the decisions we make and the things we do are all bent by sin. The Bible says we are all **spiritually dead** in our sins.

Ephesians 2:1 As for you, *you were dead* in your transgressions and sins, (NIV®)

When we're born in this life, we're all **still-born**. We're born spiritually dead, and we can't save ourselves. We need the Holy Spirit to come and **give us spiritual life**. That's called regeneration. *Regeneration is an act of spiritual resurrection by the Holy Spirit in which he gives us new life, a second birth, a spiritual birth.*

John 3:5 Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are *born of water and the Spirit*. (NIV®)

When you're not a Christian, and begin to feel convicted of your sin, and a desire to have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, that's the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is giving you a new spiritual birth, *a spiritual resurrection from the dead*. Our **articles of faith** do not state whether you have to believe regeneration takes place before faith, or afterwards, but I think saving-faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit. When he regenerates us, he comes and **dwells within us**. That's right, God lives in you!

1 Corinthians 6:19 Do you not know that your bodies are *temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;* (NIV®)

Have you ever lived with someone who is cleaner than you? I've experienced both being the dirty one and the clean one. Growing up in my house, *sometimes cleanliness seemed next to godliness*, so I learned to be really clean. But the first roommate I ever had in seminary, I think he was determined to teach me *godliness is a work of grace*. When the Holy Spirit comes into our lives, he goes to work, cleaning and scrubbing our sins and the ways we dishonor God without even knowing it.

Sanctification is the process of us becoming holier and more like Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:29 For those God foreknew he also predestined *to be conformed to the image of his Son*, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. (NIV®)

We know we are being sanctified as we see the **fruit of the Spirit** in our lives.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (ESV)

The idea with sanctification is that over the course of our lives the Spirit makes us more and more like Jesus Christ. I've used a graph of the **Dow Jones Industrial Average** over the last 100 years to show this. You can see that over time the trend heads upwards, not always up, or down, but generally up. Now I think we've all met Christians nearing the end of their lives who don't seem Christ-like, so another good picture of sanctification is a **ball-of-yarn**. The ball starts small, but as the Holy Spirit leads us through life, the sum cumulation of sanctification grows bigger and bigger until we have a big beautiful ball of sanctification, a whole life of being made more like Jesus. *The Holy Spirit saves and sanctifies.*

He gives gifts to the church.

As Jesus was wrapping up his ministry and heading to the cross, he promised to send the Holy Spirit to the church, and that the Holy Spirit would be better than if Jesus had stayed.

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.* (NIV®)

The Holy Spirit is called the advocate, which means counselor or helper. At Pentecost, 10 days after he ascended into heaven, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to help the church.”

Acts 2:2-4 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. *All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit* and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. (NIV®)

This is the inaugural visit of the Holy Spirit to the church. The Holy Spirit came so that he could empower everyday people with talents and gifts to serve the local church. There are four different lists of the gifts of the Spirit in the New Testament, each different, which tells us these lists aren't **comprehensive**, but **representative**. In other words, the Holy Spirit could still be giving new and different gifts for the benefit of the church today, so not only preaching, but artists and accountants. Instead of reading each passage, I am going to share the lists of gifts, which I've taken from Millard Erickson's *Christian Theology* (pg 891).

Romans 12:6-8	1 Corinthians 12:4-11	Ephesians 4:11	1 Peter 4:11
prophecy service teaching exhortation liberality giving aid acts of mercy	wisdom knowledge faith healing working of miracles prophecy ability to distinguish spirits various tongues interpretation of tongues	apostles prophets evangelists pastors and teachers	speaking service

Some of the gifts of the Spirit are **controversial**, like performing miracles, prophecy, and especially speaking and interpreting tongues. There's good reason for this as many believers and churches have abused these gifts and hurt many lives. But I want to take a moment and encourage us as a church to define our position with these gifts as **“open and seeking to honor God in all things.”**

1 Corinthians 14:27-28 say that the speaking of tongues should be used in a careful and orderly manner, and there must always be an interpreter present. I don't think we'll ever become a **charismatic church** known for using these gifts, but I hope that if the Holy Spirit wants to give us these gifts, we would test them to see if they're real, and then accept them thoughtfully and humbly. *The Holy Spirit gives gifts to the church.*

Response: How should we respond to the Holy Spirit?

The second half of 1 Corinthians 12 compares the church to a **body with many parts**. In other words, the Holy Spirit gives different gifts, like teaching and preaching, to some parts of the church body, and other gifts, like service and hospitality, to other parts of the body. This means that when we each use our gifting, the church is functioning as the Holy Spirit intends, and when we're not, the body is broken.

Seek his gifting.

Each one of us is supernaturally gifted by the Holy Spirit to serve the local church in some capacity, often in surprising ways. One of the gifts the Spirit has given me is **speaking**. I never thought he'd give that to me. I

mean, my family always told me I mumbled and I still do. I feel like Moses who felt “slow of speech and tongue” and asked God to send another (Ex 4:10-12). But somehow, in my weakness, the Holy Spirit provides his gifting so that I can serve the church and so that we can all say, “Wow, God really is great!”

Don't you want to have the Holy Spirit work in **your weakness**? When God **calls** us to something, he promises to equip us for it. The Holy Spirit will help us out. He'll gift us to do it. I want to take a moment and **challenge you** to start figuring out what your gifting is so you can serve the church. After church, talk to a volunteer who is doing something you think would be interesting, and give it a try. Go through a **discernment process** with them to see if this really is your gifting, and if it's not, try something else.

In his book, Francis Chan shares a question his youth pastor once asked him, “What would your church (and the worldwide church) look like if everyone was committed as you are?”³ If you're holding back, that means a part of the body isn't working as it should. Maybe you're an ear. Help us hear. Maybe you're a toe. Help us walk. Maybe you're the tiniest cell, help us multiply.

At small group, Joe and Jennie like to open with an ice-breaker question. A recent one was, “If you could do any job for a month, and be fully equipped to do it, what would you do?” Joe wanted to be President and Andrew wanted to play professional golf. I wanted to be a movie director. Why would we ever do any of those things when the God of the universe has empowered us with a supernatural gift to serve and love the bride of Christ, the church? Are you seeking and using the gifts of the Holy Spirit? *Seek his gifting.*

Seek his filling.

Ephesians 5:18b says, “...be filled with the Spirit.” This is different than that initial indwelling. It's a **special pouring** out of God's Holy Spirit on us to serve him and do what he's calling us to do. It's an **anointing**. See the Holy Spirit not only gifts us, he promises to be with us as we obey him.

Paul Little challenged me to think differently about filling. When I think of it, I think of pouring **water** from a pitcher into a glass. But the Holy Spirit isn't a thing, he's a **person**. Being filled with the Holy Spirit means getting to know him. It means being in **relationship** with him. It means accepting his invitation to dance, and letting him lead us through life. It means letting him take over every nook and cranny of our hearts, our motives, our minds, our actions. Don't you want to be filled by a relationship with the Holy Spirit?

The way we **enter into relationship** with the Holy Spirit is through inviting him to come and fill us, and lead us through life. We invite him to use us, to help us, to lead us. We **pray** and **fast** because we hunger for more and more of God's Spirit. We sense he is filling us as he directs our minds and hearts to Jesus Christ. When we grow more and more in love with him it's because of the Spirit. *Seek his filling.*

Seek the gifting and filling of the Holy Spirit.

I was pretty nervous when I started studying the Holy Spirit, but I'm so grateful I did. It's so refreshing to focus on him. Thinking about him has made me more sensitive to his leading, and it makes me want him to be active and moving in my life and in this church. I hope this sermon will spark a desire in you to know and experience the Holy Spirit too. *Seek the gifting and filling of the Holy Spirit.*

Pastor Jonathan Romig wrote and preached this message for the people of Cornerstone Congregational Church. [Click here to listen to more sermons](#) or [click here to read our story](#).

³ Chan, Francis; Sprinkle, Preston. *The Francis Chan Collection: Crazy Love, Forgotten God, Erasing Hell, and Multiply* (Kindle Location 2893). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.