

Andrew Murray said, *"The trouble with us Christians is, we don't know our God."*

Several years ago, Francis Chan observed the underutilized gift of the Holy Spirit and so he wrote a book he called *The Forgotten God* because in church we often talk about God the Father. Even more than the Father, we talk about God the Son, Jesus, who gave his life for our life on the cross, atoning for our sin, giving us his righteousness which qualifies us for heaven.

But, when it comes to the Holy Spirit, too often we forget about him. Sometimes people say, "I have Jesus, why do I need the Holy Spirit?" That question reveals a life defeating confusion about the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is one of the greatest gifts Jesus gave us to absolutely empower us to live out the Christian life. Too often in our day-to-day, moment-to-moment thoughts, words and actions we forget about who the Spirit is, where he is and what he's doing.

If we're not forgetting about the Spirit, we're at least quite confused about him. No doubt, Satan, God's greatest enemy has had a part in this confusion about the Holy Spirit.

A. W. Tozer said, *"I believe it has been the work of the devil to surround the person of the Holy Spirit with an aura of queerness, or strangeness, so that the people of God feel that this Spirit-filled life is a life of being odd and peculiar, of being a bit uncanny"* (Tozer, A. W., *How to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit*).

[Transition] - Today we step into week 2 of our series on the Holy Spirit I'm calling "*Opening to the Holy Spirit.*" My hope is that after this series you will be much more familiar with the Spirit and be more willing to lean into and be in step with him in your life. He really is the key to living Christian life and serving with the gifts and abilities he's given you.

Last week a few of you asked me for a good book or two on the Holy Spirit, so that you can do some additional reading to reinforce our series. Let me suggest a few possible books for you. These may be in our church library too. Each of these runs 8-10 bucks on Amazon.

1. *The Holy Spirit* - Billy Graham. (Solid Overall Treatment)
2. *God the Holy Spirit* - D. Martin Lloyd-Jones (In depth-treatment)
3. *Relying on the Holy Spirit* - This is a personal Bible self-study produced by Charles Stanley (Practical Self-study guide)
4. *Help is Here* - Max Lucado has very readable book on the Spirit.

[Transition] - Today I want to try and bring more clarity to the questions: Who the Holy Spirit is? Where is he? And why it's so beneficial for you to be in step with him. I introduced some of this last week, but today I want to unpack it in more detail.

And the first thing we need to understand is that the Holy Spirit is part of our triune God.

The Holy Spirit is God

While the Bible never uses the word Trinity, it speaks of God existing and acting in three persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of God is present from the second verse of Genesis to the last chapter of Revelation. The Holy Spirit is integral throughout the Bible. *Everything God did in creation and redemption He did by His Spirit.*

Being fully part of the Godhead, the Spirit of God is all-powerful, all-knowing and of course, all present; having the ability to be everywhere at

once. In fact, the Spirit is not lessor or a different kind of being than God the Father or God the Son. We know this because the words *Spirit* and *God* are used interchangeably in the New Testament. He is a person not an indistinct "power" or "thing." Unlike the Star wars movies, the Spirit is not "The force" that we can control or use.

Since the Holy Spirit is a person, he is capable of all the things we associate with personhood: thoughts, feelings and ability to relate and communicate. The Spirit can rejoice with you, and he can be grieved with you and also...by you. And he can be resisted or "quenched" in your life.

The Holy Spirit prays for us. And when we run out of words, he prays even more passionately for us. He not only has the ability to have relationship with us...but also with the Father and the Son. The relational closeness and intimacy among the Godhead is a beautiful mystery and through the Spirit we are included in that fellowship.

But when we forget about the Holy Spirit or we don't lean into him in the intense battles of our lives...we are forgetting about God. We're leaving the power for Christian living un-utilized and we're trying to fight through our personal battles using only our own experience, know-how, or reason.

[Transition] - Now, in the book of John, when Jesus begins to talk about the Spirit, he promises the Spirit would be the most accessible and active presence of God in our lives as Christians.

Open your Bibles to John Chapter 14. Jesus has been ministering among the people and now he's beginning to talk more about his crucifixion and his departure from his followers, and he comforts them with these words. Read 14:15-17

The Holy Spirit is sent to literally dwell in Christians

The profound piece in this is that prior to this, the Spirit of God had only been "on" or "with" God's people, but now Jesus is saying when he comes, he'll be "IN" you.

Flip ahead now and look at John 16:5-7. Again, Jesus is talking about his departure and so understandably his closest followers are grieved and terribly sad about this. So, Jesus helps them understand that as good as it has been for them to have him WITH them in the flesh, it will be even better to have the Holy Spirit "IN" them.

Can you imagine how awesome it would have been to have Jesus right there with you in the flesh? Can you imagine the thrill of hanging out with him, experiencing his love and delight in you, and experiencing his powerful ministry first hand?

But, Jesus is saying it's *"for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate {Holy Spirit} will not come to you..."* not just to be "with" them but to be "in" them.

That word "Advocate" is a beautiful word that means, "one who helps, by consoling, encouraging, or mediating on behalf of."¹ It can refer to, "the one who tenderly mothers us," or, 'the one who falls down beside us,' like a person who when finding a person collapsed along the road, kneels down beside the victim, cares for his needs, and carries him to safety.²

Far from being an intimidating, demanding, taskmaster, Jesus speaks of the Spirit as tender, comforting, compassionate, and loving presence of God in us.

[Transition] - Now, since the Holy Spirit is a personal God, part of the triune Godhead sent to be in us when we trust in Jesus a Savior, what is he doing in us? What's the purpose of his presence in us? Why is he sent to us?

¹ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, [*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*](#) (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 141.

² Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, [*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*](#) (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 141.

Jesus begins to teach about his role and purpose in the next few verses. In addition, we have a number of other verses in the rest of the New Testament that unpack even further why the Holy Spirit is such a phenomenal gift to us.

I want us to look at a number of these with the hopes that you will understand why Jesus would say, in verse 7 here in John 16 that, it's for your good that I'm going away so the Spirit can come and be IN you. And my hope is that as you are refreshed in the ways the Holy Spirit desires to be close to you, love you, champion you, and help you, you will no longer allow him to be underutilized in your life.

Let's start with how Jesus says the Holy Spirit will help us...Look at verses 8-11

Ways the Holy Spirit helps you

1. The Holy Spirit will convict you of sin.

Now, I get it...at first this doesn't sound like helpful help. Being convicted doesn't sound like a welcome ministry of the Holy Spirit at first.

Conviction is not a pleasant experience but, when you stop to think about it, if the Holy Spirit never awakened you to your sin and your need for a Savior, you would have never felt the need to embrace the love and forgiveness of Jesus. You would never have been qualified for heaven. And you would be destined to live eternally separated from God.

[Illustration] - Conviction works a lot like the gift of pain or the gift of fear in our lives. If you don't feel pain in your body, you will not protect your injury and heal properly. If you don't experience healthy fear levels, then you are more prone to all sorts of trouble. We don't like to feel conviction, pain or fear, but they are gifts to us.

Thank you, Holy Spirit, for pointing out when I'm getting out in the weeds of life. Thank you for using conviction to draw my attention to how I'm wandering from God's best for me. Does it make sense now why conviction, though unpleasant, is a gift to us?

[Transition] - Next, Jesus says, the Holy Spirit will teach you. Now, for the next several of these I've printed out in your outline, more verses that we can cover. I put them there for your further study, and reflection this week. Also, today I want to give you an overview of these ways the Spirit helps us but, in the weeks ahead we'll be unpacking these in greater detail. The second way the Spirit helps you is to teach you and bring things to your awareness.

2. The Holy Spirit teaches and brings things to your awareness. (John 14:26; Psalm 143:10; Acts 9:31; 13:2; 15:28; 1 Cor. 2:9-10).

This not only means that the Holy Spirit enables you to understand the Bible, but he is also able to help you remember what you've learned. He is able to bring those verses back to your awareness, when you need them most.

I knew guys in Seminary who tried to rely on this help from the Holy Spirit when it came to test time. The only problem was, they never studied or really learned the verses in the first place.

[Transition] - If we'll utilize the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, he will teach us and lead us into and remind us of all truth. Jesus also taught the Spirit will empower our testimony and witness of God.

3. The Spirit empowers you to be God's witnesses (Acts 1:8; Rom. 8:26; Ephesians 3:16-19).

After giving his followers the Great Commission, Jesus told them to *"wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses..."*

Always remember friends, it is the Holy Spirit who draws people to the gospel. And if you'll utilize his power and presence in you, he will equip you with the strength, courage, appropriate wording and the scripture recollection that you need to witness to his work in your life. This leads us to the fourth way the Spirit helps you...

4. The Spirit helps you speak when you need to the right words

(Mark 13:11; Luke 12:12).

At times the followers of Jesus were put on the spot and forced to defend their choice to follow Jesus. The Holy Spirit was able to give them the words they needed.

Jesus taught that in the end times as it becomes more and more difficult to live as a Christian and persecution increases the Holy Spirit will be there to help give you the perfect words, you'll need in the moment. Guys we can rest in this promise.

When you utilize the Holy Spirit in your life he will help you know exactly what to say when you are at a loss for words. Or when you are in a difficult conversation of conflict resolution or necessary confrontation, the Holy Spirit can enable you to speak the truth in love.

[Transition] - Fifth way the Spirit helps you...

5. The Holy Spirit gives you gift(s) for serving the common good of the church (1 Cor. 12:7).

Each of us has something...and often a number of somethings...to offer because of what the Spirit gives us and enables us to do. This is talking about the Spiritual gifting we have talked about recently in our Corinthians series. We'll unpack more of that later in our series.

[Transition] - A sixth way the Spirit helps us is...

6. Through the Holy Spirit you are adopted into the family of God

(Rom. 8:15-16).

We become the children of God, which leads to intimate access to the Father. We have not received a Spirit that keeps us in fear and uncertainty. And we're not kept in bondage. Instead the Spirit makes us God's kids with all the rights and privileges thereof.

[Illustration] - I've shared this story with you before but, when I'm in sermon prep time, I basically barricade myself in my office. I put a sign on my door to not interrupt me, and my admin guards the door. But over the years, if my kids came to the office...or later if my grandkids come to the office...they walk right past all those guards and signs and walk right into my office. And I drop everything and love and hug and listen to whatever they want to tell me. That is the right and privilege of being sons and daughters and grandsons and granddaughters. And it's the same with God. We are his kids with access to his throne-room 24/7.

[Transition] - Seventh way the Spirit helps you is by giving you eternal life.

7. The Spirit gives you life and freedom (Romans 8:10-11; 2 Cor. 3:17). The Bible says when you become a Christian, the Spirit plants resurrection life in you. This means even though your mortal body is still subject to death...when you die, you will be made alive again for eternity just like how he raised Christ from the dead. This is his regenerating work, bringing new life—eternal life to you.

And in addition to new life, the Bible says the Spirit of the Lord brings freedom. Freedom in two fundamental ways:

1. Freedom from the consequences of sin—Romans 8 says, *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death."*
2. Freedom from bondage or slavery to sin— With the Spirit's power now in you as a Christian, you have the ability to say "no" to

ungodliness. By relying on the Holy Spirit, you have the power to resist temptation.

In our world that is plagued by all kinds of addictions and bondage to destructive patterns of sin, this is a fundamental hope the Spirit gives us. He is your power for living free from the hurts, habits, and hang-ups that so easily entangle us.

[Transition] - This is the eighth way the Holy Spirit empowers you...to put to death sinful habits that plague you.

8. The Holy Spirit empowers you to put to death the sinful habits that plague you (Romans 8:2-17; Colossians 3:1-17; Galatians 5:16-21; 2 Cor. 3:18).

The Spirit has the power to set us free from the sins and destructive habits we cannot get rid of on our own. This is a lifelong process we enter into with the Holy Spirit when we first believe in Jesus for Salvation.

I want to be clear, when we place our faith in Jesus for salvation, he forgives our sin and gives us his righteousness to cover us making us fit for heaven. However, we then begin a transformation process of becoming like Christ in our actual actions, words and attitudes. We begin to grow up into who Jesus has already declared us to be.

[Transition] - Not only does the Holy Spirit give us the power to put off the negative, sinful junk in our lives, he empowers us to build Christ-like qualities into our speech, attitudes and actions.

9. The Holy Spirit can bear godly fruit in your life (Galatians 5:22-26).

Paul says the fruit of the Spirit is "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." These qualities will characterize our lives in greater and greater degrees as we utilize the Spirit, seek to yield to his influence in our lives, cooperating with him allowing ourselves to be grown and molded by him.

Conclusion:

Look over these ways the Holy Spirit can help you. Now it begins to make sense why Jesus said, "It will be better for you that depart so the Holy Spirit can come to you." What an amazing gift?

The Holy Spirit at the core of everything about our lives with God. He draws us to God, saves us in God, equips and empowers us for God and raises us to life with God.

It has been said that fundamentally the Holy Spirit is given to us to make the power of the resurrected life of Christ and all the blessings that come with that, operative in our lives.

[Illustration] - If it's helpful, think of the Spirit as the sap in a tree. It is the life-giving energy and power that produces new growth from deepest roots, to the trunk, to the branches to the stem, to the twigs, to the bud, to the leaf and the fruit.

This is why sandwiched between the two passages we opened with today -John 14 and 16-is John 15. What metaphor does Jesus give to help us get our heads and hearts around this? "*I am the vine; you are the branches,*" Jesus said. "*If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*"

Far too many Christians have forgotten the Holy Spirit and left him out of their daily Christians life. Has that been true of you? Do you look over this list of ways the Spirit can help us and wonder why these things are not more a part of your life?

Don't be discouraged. Over the next 6 weeks we're going to drill down on these ways and get specific and get practical. We're going to help you open your heart and mind to his presence. And we're going to help you open your life to him, so he has greater access to you and greater influence in your life. We're gonna talk about how to learn to recognize

his voice. We're going to talk about what it looks like to cooperate with him.

This week as we get started in this series, here's what I'd invite you to do: Review this list of ways the Spirit was sent to help you live the Christian life.

There are 9, so take 1-2 per day this next week. Read the verses that go with them. Reflect on them. Reflect on your life. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit directly to help you begin to recognize his presence, sense his leading, and utilize him to the fullest in your life.