

10) The Holy Spirit, Part 1

What is the Holy Spirit and how is it connected to God, to Christ, and to us? And how does the Holy Spirit move in the world? Part 1 will focus on the bible and Part 2 will focus on the movement of the Holy Spirit in the world.

1) The Holy Spirit in the Bible.

In the opening chapters of the bible we're told that before God spoke creation into being "a wind from God swept over the waters." (Genesis 1:2) This wind (*ruach* in Hebrew) is also identified as the "breath" of God (*nishmah* in Hebrew) when God breathes life into humans (Genesis 2:7) and into all living things. And so, the opening metaphors describing the Holy Spirit have to do with wind and breath. Later in the Older Testament the Spirit of God is also associated with "inspiration" (meaning one receives the Spirit) manifesting in faith, courage, grace, wisdom, insight and prophecy, as well as revelation (the kind of inspiration that is felt as direct communication of truth from God). The metaphor for inspiration or revelation often enough is fire, which reflects light in darkness but also a burning energy that awakens, purifies and inflames us. Wind and fire are the core metaphors of the Holy Spirit.

In the New Testament the word for Spirit (*pneuma* in Greek) is also associated with breath, but also in a way that is internal. Jesus also calls it a wind (John 3), and adds the metaphor of birth and re-birth as the work of the Spirit. You can feel the Spirit working and see its effects in your life and in the life of others, but you cannot control it. It moves as it moves. You can be moved by it and caught up in it (inspiration), and even channel it in certain directions, but you cannot bottle it or contain it. Later, with the story of Pentecost, fire is also associated with the Spirit as the community of believers are inflamed with the bold love of God to create counter-cultural community of care and fellowship, and reach out into the world overcoming all kinds of boundaries of class, gender, race and culture that divide.

And while in the Older Testament the Holy Spirit was given to particular persons (Moses, prophets and so forth), at Pentecost, the Spirit is diffused throughout the whole body of believers. Love shared becomes the movement of the Spirit, and as the wind and flame spreads, believers move boldly into ever new connections and transformations by the Spirit they would never have imagined. Isn't this awesome?!

The Holy Spirit is also very much involved with Jesus, setting the stage for his remarkable birth and growth into his vocation as Messiah/Christ. When Jesus experiences that moment when he goes public in his ministry at his baptism, the Holy Spirit is imaged as a dove that descends on him. This is interpreted as the special inspiration Jesus receives to launch his kingdom of God movement of freedom and salvation beginning with his own people. The Holy Spirit is involved throughout Jesus ministry, and after Jesus death, resurrection and ascension to reign alongside

his Abba God, The Holy Spirit moves further to embody Christ in the world through those persons and communities that open their hearts to being in-breathed and in-spined as Christ's hands, feet, voice and heart in the world.

2) The Gifts & Fruit of the Holy Spirit.

The apostle Paul refers to the "gifts" and the "fruit" of the Holy Spirit, both of which are essential for building genuine Christian community and reaching out as Christ-love into the world. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul cites the gifts of wisdom, knowledge (a knowing that grows out of loving), faith (a core trust in God's providence no matter what happens), healing (care for people that nourishes minds, emotions, hearts and bodies), bold acts (of justice and love), prophecy (speaking truth in love and seeing what's coming and what's possible), discernment of spirits (seeing into people behind the façade, the fear, the anger and the hate), speaking in tongues (communicating with people from different worlds, languages and cultures). All of these gifts are necessary for building community and connecting with people through the love of God. Other references to "gifts" of the Spirit are found in Romans 12 and Ephesians 4. We are to seek out these gifts, ask God to help us discern what are our gifts, and keep growing them in us.

In Galatians 5:20, Paul also lists the fruit of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. The image is of a garden with fruit trees of various kinds, all necessary and essential for a garden that is whole. Think about how important these fruits are in building genuine and caring relationships as much as gardens. We are to pray for growth of such fruit in ourselves and how we build relationships in the world.

How does the Holy Spirit manifest in and through you?