

Receive the Holy Spirit

Who is the Holy Spirit?

Wednesday 03 November 2021

6:30 PM-8:00 PM

Opening Prayer

Background

We regularly say in our profession of faith, the Nicene Creed, “We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son.” Do we really believe what we are saying when we say that? Or is it only a vague concept? Who is this Holy Spirit that we say we believe in? How do we know the one we say we believe in? Do we desire to know the Holy Spirit? When do we encounter this Holy Spirit? These are things to consider in this and the next two sessions.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned a great deal in the Gospel of John, especially near the end. In the Acts of the Apostles, the Holy Spirit has a prominent role. In that Book, the Holy Spirit is regularly received by believers in very physical manifestations. The Spirit descends on them like fire. It causes them to speak in foreign tongues, to prophecy and perform miracles. Most of us would say how wonderful it would be to receive the Spirit in such a way. Sign me up. I want that. Today, we still hear of such manifestations, or see them on television. But we also doubt when people say they are filled with the Holy Spirit and fall to the floor, dance about, or speak what sounds like gibberish. “That stuff can’t be real. It is so fake. They just want our money.” And those who claim such spiritual experiences as real may say that those of us who do not have them are not truly children of God, and have not received the Holy Spirit.

How do we perceive this “giver of life,” this person? We can more easily conceive of Jesus, since he took on human form. We can identify with him. We can also more easily conceive of God the Father, since we tend to imagine him as some larger, more magnificent version of ourselves. But, how do we imagine the Holy Spirit?

She* is usually described using imagery. The most common images of the Holy Spirit are fire, wind, water, and the dove. None of these are easy for us to identify with. We cannot conceive of them as someone we can go to for help or comfort. Who would confess their deepest hopes, troubles or challenges to a fire or a bowl of water or a bird?

Yet, Paul who mentions the Holy Spirit often says, “May the amazing grace of the Master, Jesus Christ, the extravagant love of God, the intimate friendship of the Holy Spirit, be with all of you.” *2 Corinthians 13:14 The Message* So, Paul must have experienced the friendship of the Holy Spirit. Starting today and over the next two weeks, we will begin to learn how we can also experience that friendship.

Though the Holy Spirit is mentioned most often in Acts and the writings of Paul, she is found throughout the Bible. She is first mentioned in *Genesis 1:2 NLT*. “The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God [Ruach Elohim] was hovering over the surface of the waters.” And in *Genesis 2:7 NLT*, “Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life [wind-Spirit-Ruach **fem.*] into the man’s nostrils, and the man became a living person.” So, the Holy Spirit is shown to be with us from the beginning and throughout time. But after the resurrection, the Holy Spirit seems to be active in special, personal, and intense ways among those who follow the Way.

How can we become acquainted with the Holy Spirit, become Her friend, and learn what She has to share and offer for our lives?

Questions to Consider

1. What is your understanding of the Holy Spirit? Who is this Holy Spirit that we say we believe in?
2. Do you desire to know the Holy Spirit? Why?
3. How can we become acquainted with the Holy Spirit, and learn what she has to share and offer for our lives?
4. Have you received the Holy Spirit? How do you know?
5. People are “slain in the Spirit,” made to do “the holy dance” by the Spirit, speak in “ecstatic tongues” under the influence of the Spirit. Is all this real? Do you want to be a part of it? Why? Why not? How does it promote God’s Kingdom?

Closing Prayer