



# **The Holy Spirit**

**Presence | Power | Peace**





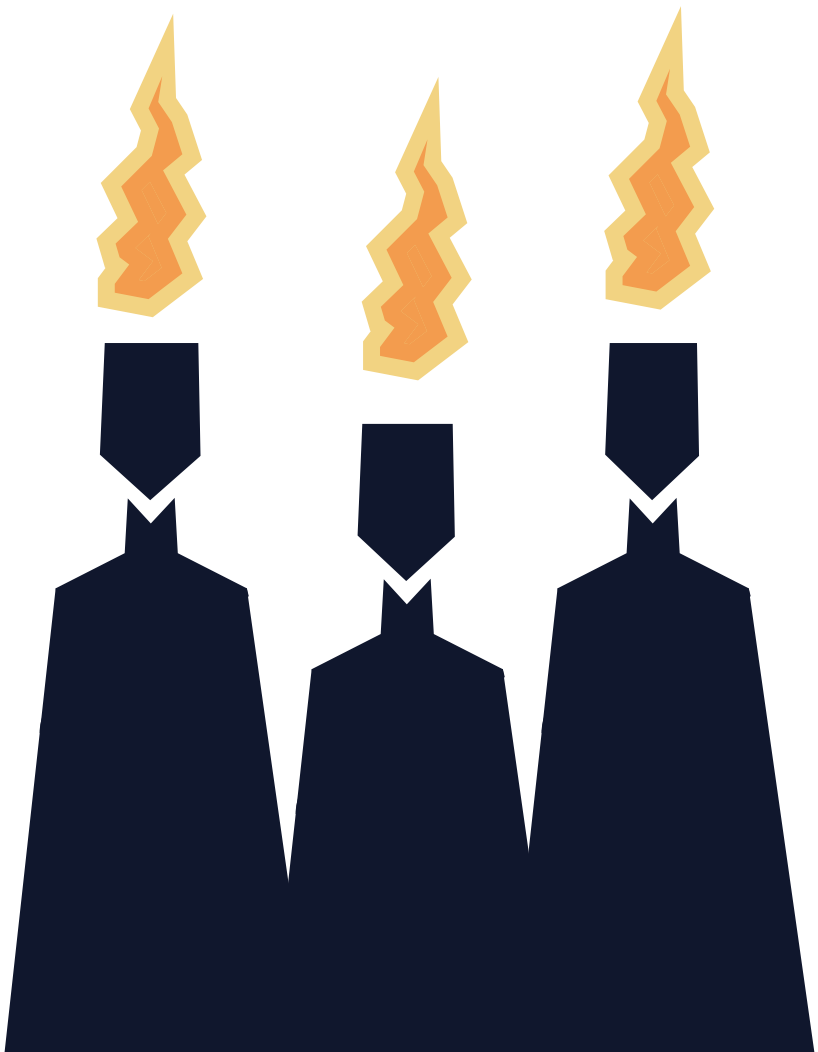
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# INTRODUCTION

What do you believe about the Holy Spirit? These days it's controversial! All Christians believe God is three in one: Father, Son, Spirit. But in the early church, the Spirit was almost the forgotten member of the Trinity, as the controversies were all around Christ. Fast forward 2000 years, with last century's rise of the Charismatic movement, still the fastest growing Christian movement throughout the world... the Spirit is now centre stage! Gifts of the Spirit like speaking in tongues (miraculous language), prophesying over people's lives, ecstatic experiences, healing for anyone who has enough faith, are now thought central to the Christian life, the signs that someone actually has God's Spirit.

In a direct reaction against this, many Christians effectively deny the place of miracles, emotions and blessings in the Christian life today. Village Church is Presbyterian, and if you had to pick an antonym of 'Charismatic' it might well be 'Presbyterian'... most Presbyterians aren't even 100% sure we should allow clapping in church!

Surely there are dangers in overemphasising miracles, emotions and blessings in this life. But is there also a danger in overreaction against that? Could we be missing what God really does offer

us by his Spirit? It would be good to see what the Bible really says.

After this series we'll return to Paul's first letter to Corinth. In chapters 12-14 he'll address a major problem in how the Corinthians view the Spirit. He'll talk very practically about the place of prophesying and speaking in tongues. But because it's so practically focussed, and because he had taught them about the Spirit before, Paul just assumes the fundamental truths about the Spirit, without fully explaining them as he does elsewhere. Before we consider the problem in Corinth, this series is a chance to hear the Bible's positive teaching about the Spirit, from start to finish (well, some key points along the way!) to see what the Spirit's presence is really meant to look like and feel like in our lives today.

Each study we'll see how the Old Testament highlights a deep need, which the New Testament says is met by Christ giving us the Spirit:

- 1. For people to know God's presence**
- 2. For people to be changed by God's power**
- 3. For people to be united in God's peace**

Topical studies like these can be a bit more stretching as we try to think through and hold together a few different Bible passages in each study, not just one. Yet even with these 3 studies and then 1 Corinthians 12-14 following soon, we won't cover all that the Bible says about the Spirit. So feel free to also raise any other questions in your groups and after the sermons.

Let's pray that God would work in us by his Spirit as we explore his word together!

HOLY

HOLY HOLY





# 1. God's Presence

**Q1.** Have you ever felt like God isn't really there? Please share your experiences.

## **Feeling the separation from God**

The Bible begins with God being very present with his creation. God's Spirit hovers over the waters (Genesis 1:2). God walks and talks with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2). But then humanity rejects God, so we're cast from his presence (Genesis 3). Ever since, we're all born outside the Garden, separated from God. To see why it's hard for us to know God's presence, **Read Isaiah 6:1-7**

**Q2.** Why is Isaiah so afraid of seeing God?

**Q3.** What saves Isaiah from death? How does that work?

**Q4.** Does this show why it's hard for sinners like us to know God's presence?

## **Knowing God's presence in Jesus and the Spirit**

John's Gospel emphasises that Jesus is the one who bridges the gap between God and us: "The Word was God" (1:1) and "the Word became flesh and

tabernacled among us” (1:14). But then Jesus goes away again! So Jesus has to explain to his disciples that he’s about to leave them to die for them:  
**read John 14:1-9, 15-27.**

**Q5.** In Jesus, the disciples had God right next to them for 3 years. But how well did that help them to know God’s presence?

**Q6.** What’s Jesus going away to do? How will that “prepare a home” for his disciples with God?

**Q7.** How will Jesus come back and live with them after that?

Jesus actually says it’s *better* for him to go away:  
**read John 16:6-14.**

**Q8.** What will the Spirit actually do?  
(see also 1 Corinthians 12:2-3)

**Q9.** Do you agree that’s better than what Jesus did while physically present on earth? Why or why not?

Jesus was God with us. The Spirit is God in us, empowering us to see, understand and believe the truth about Jesus, from the inside, as we never could without the Spirit, even with Jesus right there.

## **God's presence now**

God says to his people "Don't be afraid, for I am with you" (see e.g. Gen 26:24, Deut 31:6, Josh 1:9, Jer 1:8). Jesus says don't be afraid because he will be with you by his Spirit (see John 14:1,27, 16:6-7).

**Q10.** If God is always present in every believer by his Spirit, how should that help us emotionally? Does it help you?

The full experience of God's presence does await the new creation, when "God himself will be with" us (Revelation 21:3), we'll need no temple because God himself is the temple (v22), and we'll see God "face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12). While we wait, the Spirit groans within us longing for that glorious end (Romans 8:23).

Yet without the Spirit, we wouldn't trust in Jesus at all, or long for God's presence at all. So if we do, that proves God is present in us right now by his Spirit, and proves we will have that full experience of God's presence in the end. So pray for each other to know God's presence, just as you realise it's only by his Spirit within you right now that you can trust in Jesus at all!

**I WILL GIVE YOU**



**A NEW HEART**

## 2. God's Power

**Q1.** Do you ever wish you could really see God's power? What do you think that would look like?

**The deepest problem** The Bible has massive displays of God's power. The flood. Rescuing Israel from slavery in Egypt. Winning them the land. But there's a problem so deep it stays untouched by God's power throughout...

**Genesis 6:5** *The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.*

**Genesis 8:21** *"Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, because every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood."*

**Jeremiah 17:9** *The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*

**Jeremiah 18:12** *"We will continue with our own plans; we will all follow the stubbornness of our evil hearts."*

**Romans 1:21** *Although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

**Q2.** Have you heard the advice 'follow your heart'? Why is it attractive? What's the danger in it?

**Q3.** Have you ever tried to change for the better and found you can't? How does that feel?

**The only solution** If we can't change our own hearts, our deepest desires, who can?...

**Deuteronomy 30:6** *The LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the hearts of your descendants, and you will love him with all your heart and all your soul so that you will live.*

**Jeremiah 31:33** *"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days"—the LORD's declaration."I will put my teaching within them and write it on their hearts."*

**Ezekiel 36:26** *"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27I will place my Spirit in you and cause you to follow my statutes."*

**Romans 2:14** *When Gentiles, who do not by nature have the law, do what the law demands...15they show that the work of the law is written on their hearts... 29A person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart—by the Spirit, not the letter.*

**Q4.** How will our heart problem finally be addressed?

**God's power now** The Galatians had come to think they needed the Old Testament law to change their lives, but Paul says only the Spirit can do that. He says they're relying on "the flesh", our natural humanity unchanged by the Spirit, which doesn't work because it's corrupted with sinful desires:

**Read Galatians 3:1-6, 13-14, 5:13-6:2.**

**Q5.** What did Jesus do so we could receive the Spirit (see 3:13-14) and what do we do to receive the Spirit? (see 3:2, 5, 14)

**Q6.** Does having the Spirit mean no more desire to sin? (see 5:13, 16, 17, 6:1)

**Q7.** How can you tell which desires are from your sinful nature and which are from the Spirit? (see 5:13-14, 19-23, 6:2)

**Q8.** Paul says the conflict you feel between temptation and faithfulness is the Spirit working in you. How does that affect your desire to side with the Spirit against sin?

**Q9.** Paul calls this Spirit-powered fight against sin the way God “works miracles among you” (Gal 3:5). Does that give you hope that sin can be overcome, even with ongoing struggle?

How then can we live by the Spirit more?

In this body, before resurrection, we'll always feel conflict between sinful desires and the new desires the Spirit gives us. That's what it feels like to have the Spirit. But finally we're free to fight sin, not just be slaves to it. This fight is the freedom Christ died to win us. So let's relish and embrace this freedom... in fact let's do that together! It's not that the Spirit's power is never seen any other way. We'll talk about other miracles in the upcoming series on 1 Corinthians 12-14. But we've seen here the main miracle the Spirit works, the miracle Israel awaited for over a thousand years, the miracle of finally changing the human heart. Pray for each other to know God's power in our own hearts, freeing us not from having sinful desires but from slavery to them, moving us instead to Christ-like love.





# 3. God's Peace

Q1. What are some ways people divide over the Spirit and his gifts?

## Hostility in the world

As soon as humanity rejected God (Genesis 3), the first effects are hatred and violence between humans: Cain and Abel (Genesis 4). God chooses Abraham and his descendants Israel, not so they could be saved alone, apart from everyone else, but precisely so that "all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12:3).

To see God's plan,

**Read Isaiah 2:1-4, 11:1-10, 19:19-24, 42:1-4.**

Q2. What big problem in the world does God want to solve?

Q3. What will happen to sworn enemies like Assyria and Egypt?

Q4. Who will bring world peace and what's so different about him?

## Peace from Jesus and the Spirit

Ephesians 2:1-10 says Jesus restores us to God. This 'vertical' peace also creates 'horizontal' peace:

**Read Ephesians 2:11-22, 4:1-6, 30-32.**

Q5. How did Jesus bring peace between people?

Q6. What's the Spirit's role in our unity with each other?

Q7. What's our role in "keeping the unity of the Spirit"? Is this easy?

Does Christian unity mean uniformity? Why or why not?

### **God's peace now**

John 1:18 says, "No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father's side—has revealed him." Jesus left this world. But we can still see God: **Read 1 John 4:7-13.** (compare also John 13:34-35, 15:5-8,16-17, 17:20-23)

Q9. How can we see God now? Can you see this around you?

If you think about it, isn't it bizarre that Christians divide over the Spirit and his gifts? Some say you're not a real Christian unless you speak in tongues; others that you're not a real Christian if you do! But a major role of the Spirit is to unite Christians in love and peace. In fact, that's the

main way we see God working by his Spirit today...  
*in our love for each other.*

But maybe it's not totally bizarre... since the early Christians in Corinth divided over the Spirit and his gifts just the same! In 1 Corinthians 12-14, we'll see Paul address this absurdity by reminding them of what we've seen in these 3 studies. The Spirit shows his presence not by flashiness but by giving us faith in Christ (12:2-3). The Spirit's power aims not at miracles for their own sake but at moving our hearts from sinful selfishness to Christ-like love (12:31, 13:1-8, 14:5,12,26). The Spirit's gifts don't make some people more special, the Spirit unites us together in peace (12:4-30, 14:33). Paul is not against miracles. He's against a focus on the flashy because that cuts directly against the very aims of the Spirit in our lives.

After this series, what do you think the Spirit wants to do in your life?

What could others specifically pray for the Spirit to do in you?

What do you hope the series on 1 Corinthians 12-14 will address?

