

Holy Spirit

Week 1: Who is the Holy Spirit?

Happy Mother's Day to all the moms out there.

This is my mom, Lynn (show picture). I so wish you all would have had a chance to meet her and she could have met you. She was great. Mom was born on April 20th, 1956. She grew up in Richmond, Indiana and lived there until around my 1st birthday when her and dad moved to Cicero.

Mom drove a school bus for Carmel for over 25 years. The last 10 of those years or so, she picked up preschool students with special needs and she absolutely loved it. She was so kind and compassionate. It was a perfect fit for her.

I got to baptize my mom on Easter of 2012 (show picture). It was a pretty special moment to share with her.

Mom struggled with some health issues for a while. I remember when I was in Middle School, she went through a series of tests trying to figure out what was going on. No one really knew. She was eventually diagnosed with a disease called Cerebellar Ataxia, which for her, symptomatically, looked like a combination of ALS, Parkinson's, and MS. She passed away on July 8th, 2016.

I got to preach her funeral, which was both the hardest thing I've ever done and one of my greatest blessings in ministry.

I wish you could have known her. You see, after that little biography about mom, you know some facts about her. You know when she was born, but I remember the birthdays when we celebrated her. You know what she did, but I remember how her eyes would light up when she'd talk about the kids. You know when she was baptized, but I can still feel her in my arms as she went under the water. You know when she passed away, but I remember holding her hand as she took her last breath.

So, while you now have some knowledge about my mom, I had the experiences. I knew her.

And, in a way, that's the tension I've been wrestling with as we start this series on the Holy Spirit today. Over the next three weeks, we're going to be studying the Holy Spirit. Who He is. What He does in our lives and in the Church. And, at the end of these three weeks, we might come away with more knowledge about the Holy Spirit, and that's good. But my desire for this series is that we will experience more of the Holy Spirit in our day to day lives and in the church.

Still, as we start today, I want to spend some time laying a Theological foundation for the Holy Spirit. To say that we'll be able to explain everything about the Holy Spirit is like saying I'm going to capture the entire ocean in a cup. It's not going to happen! There are things that we will

never understand about God, the Holy Spirit, the Trinity. And the fact that we can't understand God completely should cause us to fall on our knees and worship Him even more.

And, one of the things I always have such a hard time wrapping my mind around is the concept of the Trinity. The Trinity is one of the most distinctive doctrines of the Christian faith. I also happen to believe it's one of the most confusing! This idea that there is one God in three persons. There is one God, but three representations of Him. God the Father. God the Son. And God the Holy Spirit.

And, people try to explain the Trinity by saying, "Well, it's kind of like an egg. One egg has three parts, a shell, the egg white, and yoke." Or, "It's like the three leaves of a clover." Or, "Three forms of water. Liquid, solid, gas." It's all one thing, but three different expressions of it.

And, all of these analogies are helpful. The problem is, they all lead to some form of heresy or another! They're incomplete and imperfect because you cannot explain an unexplainable God. All we can say is that somehow, somehow, our God exists as 3 in 1 in this kind of Divine Dance. And, we see these expressions of God and clues of the Trinity right at the beginning of the book. In fact, in verse 2, the Holy Spirit of God shows up.

Genesis 1:2 says, "Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."

That word for Spirit is Ruach. It's the wind or breath of God. And it's hovering over the formless, empty, dark waters. This picture of chaos. And, right in the middle of all of it, the Spirit of God, the breath of God, starts bringing life and order and beauty to the chaos. And so, in the beginning was God and the Spirit of God was powerfully at work in Creation.

A few verses later, in Genesis 1:26, we find another clue of the Trinity. It says, "Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness...'" Who's God talking to? He's talking to the other parts of the Trinity. The Son and the Spirit. After God forms Adam out of the dust, he breaths his Ruach into him. He breaths His Spirit of life into Adam.

And so, right here, in opening words of the Bible, we see evidence of the Trinity and some of the key functions of the Holy Spirit. Just like wind is powerful, the Spirit has the power to bring order and beauty to the chaos. Just like breath keeps us alive, the Holy Spirit gives us life.

We see evidence of the Trinity continue throughout the Old Testament and into the New Testament as well. When Jesus gives his sending orders to the disciples in the Great Commission, he tells them, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." Jesus places himself and the Holy Spirit on equal ground with the Father. He tells them to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

To do something in the name of someone else meant to evoke their character. So, essentially, Jesus sends his disciples, and us, into the darkness, into the emptiness of this world to baptize people, bringing order to the chaos and new life to death.

And, when we find this new life through Christ, the Spirit of God comes and dwells in us. We receive the Ruach of God. We receive His power and His life that sustains us. Jesus promises this to us in John 14. He says...(READ John 14:15-18)

Now, there are a couple of words here that are important. The first one is the word "Advocate." This title that Jesus gives the Holy Spirit is the Greek word Paraclete, which means "the one who comes alongside." It can also be translated as comforter or helper. So, Jesus is saying that the Holy Spirit will come as our Paraclete, our comforter and our helper. He's our encourager.

But, there's another word in this verse that I think is equally important and it's the word "Another." Jesus says, "He (the Father) will give you **another** advocate." That word "another" is interesting. There were two Greek words for another. One of them meant "another of a different kind." And so, it would be like Apples and Oranges. Both are fruits, but they are different kinds of fruits. That's one Greek word for "another" but it's NOT the one used in our passage.

The one used here means "another of the exact same kind." This is like comparing two apples. It's two individual items that are the exact same kind. That's the word Jesus' uses. The Holy Spirit is *another of the exact same kind* as the Son and the Father. Now, why is this important? Well, it's important because Jesus is saying that the Holy Spirit will be to us what *He* is to the 12 disciples.

The Holy Spirit will be God's presence in those who believe. He will be our advocate. Our helper. Our counselor. The Holy Spirit gives us the power to fight temptation and speak boldly for Christ. He gives us strength to push on and endure in our faith. The Holy Spirit comforts us when we feel defeated and reminds us that God has not left us alone as an orphan in this world, but has adopted us into His family.

That's why Jesus says later in John 16:7 that it's good for Him to leave so that the Holy Spirit can come. The disciples witnessed this first hand. When the Holy Spirit came on them at Pentecost, they went from fearful, cowering, half-hearted followers locked in the upper room to bold, outspoken, transformed believers. The only difference was the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit that God has given us. Has breathed into us.

So, that's a small glimpse into who the Holy Spirit is. He's the Ruach of God. The wind and breath of God that moves with power and brings life. He is our Advocate who comes to our defense against the accusations of Satan who tries to tear us down. He leads us to the Truth. He is our encourager, comforter, and counselor.

One commentary said, “The Holy Spirit is the point at which the Trinity becomes personal to the believer.” We experience the power of God and the life of Jesus through the presence of the Holy Spirit living and moving in us.

I wonder, where do you need the Spirit of God in your life today? Where do you need order in a chaotic place or relationship? Where do you need new life in a place that feels dark and empty and lonely? Maybe counsel and comfort?

A few weeks ago, I was talking to Claudia Mitchell, who does a lot of counseling for us at the church, about how appropriate it is that this series starts on Mother’s Day. Today is a great day to celebrate the moms in our life, but it’s also a hard day for a lot of people. In fact, some women stay home on Mother’s Day because of the pain it causes.

So, if I can just speak to the moms for a little bit...may the Holy Spirit be your Counselor and Comforter when you’re at the end of your rope and you don’t know what to do. When you think you’ve blown it. When you feel crushed by the expectation to be the “perfect mom.”

May the Holy Spirit be your Advocate when Satan whispers lies that make you feel like you don’t measure up or that you’re not enough. In those little moments of self-sacrifice that go unnoticed or unappreciated, may the Spirit encourage you that they matter. You matter.

To the women who desire to be a mom, but it just hasn’t happened yet, may the Spirit comfort you when the pain of loss or unfulfilled expectations wears you down. May He bring peace to the chaos of your mind when you question God’s goodness or are made to feel “less than.”

To the moms who had an abortion, or gave up a child to adoption, may the Holy Spirit heal your heart today.

Maybe you lost your mom this year and so this Mother’s Day brings up some of that pain again. Maybe it’s been years and you still wish you could pick up the phone and call her. Maybe the relationship with your mom is *complicated*, or fractured, and today is a reminder of that wound.

Today, may you not just *know* that the Holy Spirit is your Comforter and Counselor, may you *know Him* as your Comforter and Counselor. May we not just know he brings order to chaos, but may we feel it in our life. And may we not just know that He is our Advocate, but may we experience the peace and the presence of God living and moving inside of us.