

THE PERSON OF THE SPIRIT
Life in the Spirit
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We're in a six-week series, "Life in the Spirit." This evening we're beginning with the theme, "The Person of the Spirit." Next Sunday night we'll look at the theme "The Work of the Spirit." What does the Spirit do? The third Sunday night we'll examine together "The Baptism in the Holy Spirit or with the Spirit." Then the fourth Sunday night we'll look at the subject, "Speaking in Other Tongues and the Baptism in the Spirit." The fifth Sunday night, "The Gifts of the Holy Spirit." And the sixth and last night of this series, "The Fruit of the Spirit."

I want us to begin for a moment by asking the question, Who is the Holy Spirit?

Perhaps the background you came from did not emphasize the Holy Spirit and therefore he remains very much a mystery to you. Perhaps you came from a church background or had an experience with God and the Bible that has taught you the wholeness of the Spirit. It may be that some of you came from a church background like myself, which was Pentecostal, or charismatic where a great deal of emphasis was placed on the Holy Spirit. But as a kid growing up in the church somehow the emphasis filtered through to me in odd kinds of ways.

I had a very difficult time relating to the Holy Spirit as a child and young person growing up in a Pentecostal church. The reason why I had such difficulty was that I didn't seem to be able to receive the baptism in the Spirit. And I knew that as a member of the Trinity that Jesus loved me. I wasn't too sure for many years of the Father's love. I thought he was waiting for an excuse to get me. And only Jesus was keeping him from lowering the boom on me. But as the third person of the Trinity I felt that the Holy Ghost didn't like me at all. Because he seemed to fill every one but me.

I thought I was doing my duty as a Christian young person I was doing the best I could and searching myself the best I could. But for some reason the Holy Spirit wasn't pleased with me and evidently really didn't want to be around me. In my emotional life I felt dislike for the Holy Spirit because he was so hard get or *it* was so hard to get. Then his name didn't exactly ring a bell with me either. Because he was the Holy *Ghost*. The people who emphasized that word most in the church often had the nastiest dispositions. They were also the plainest looking folk. I thought therefore that maybe the Holy Spirit had that kind of disposition and personality. That he was so holy he only was around people who were grumpy.

Then there was this matter of his being a *Ghost*. I was frightened to death of ghosts because they hung around dead people and they were spooky and they were very mysterious. The Holy Ghost therefore had a couple of strikes against him when it came to relating to me. I was having the difficulty of seeing him as a loving person who was already in my life and who was continually seeking to fill me more with the presence of God and make my personality like Jesus. I had a very warped view of the Holy Spirit.

When we ask the question, Who is the Holy Spirit? We recognize our limitations. God alone says, "I am that I am," that is God has the full and final right to define himself and all our language which attempts to describe God ultimately comes short of completely describing him as he is.

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Therefore we talk about the person and character of God. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. We realize that in a theological way we always we always lisp. It's like someone has said, We're trying to translate the understanding of God into our every day experience and into language which can be appropriated. It's like trying to describe the concept of pineapple to an Eskimo. Since an Eskimo has never seen a pineapple nor eaten one maybe the closest you could get is sweet, chewey blubber. I pray that in my language tonight on the Holy Spirit I can get close at least with using the language of scripture to understand the Spirit.

Our theme tonight is "The Person of the Spirit." There are three essential things we want to note tonight about the person of the Spirit.

The first thing we want to note is that the Holy Spirit is person. And therefore personal. When we talk about the Spirit we are not talking about "the force." The Holy Spirit is different for example than a force such as electricity, which is non-personal in nature. The Holy Spirit is very much personal. This is a very critical perspective because the Holy Spirit is often thought of as being a Power and he is powerful. But before he is powerful he is a person. And if we simply think of him as power then he becomes someone who we try to get a hold of and use. But if he is person he is seeking to get a hold of us and to use us.

Therefore we ought to avoid referring to the Holy Spirit as "It". Or describing the in-filling of the presence of the Spirit in our lives by saying, "We got it!" And by the way, that's a very Pentecostal term. When we say we have received the baptism of the Spirit I've often heard people say, "I got it! Did you get it?" You can look through scripture and you will never find that kind of terminology used in the Bible because we don't so much get it. He, the Holy Spirit, gets us. We then are delighted to receive his presence in ever deepening dimensions in our life.

How do we know that the Holy Spirit is person? The scriptures bear witness to that in a number of different ways.

First when the Holy Spirit is described personal pronouns are used. For example, in John 16, twelve times in that one chapter when Jesus is talking of the coming of the Spirit, following his ascension, he refers to the Holy Spirit in the masculine Greek pronoun – He. Specifically referring to the Spirit as person.

Then the Spirit also is personal in that he has a name that Jesus uses of himself. John 14:16 Jesus says, "I am going to send you another Comforter or another Paraclete." There are two significant things about that term. Both the word "another" and the word "comforter" or "paraclete".

In the Greek language there are two words for the word "another". One stood for another thing which was of a different kind – something totally unlike that which was first described. The other was used to describe another of the same kind. So when Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit as being the comforter, he says I'm going to send you another one just like me. Not someone different from me. But another like me. A Paraclete. Which literally means, "one called alongside to help." Our personal helper.

There is a course that International Correspondence Institute has developed that is on the Holy Spirit. It's simply called "Our Helpful Friend." I can't think of better terminology to translate

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what Jesus is saying here about the strong friend we have in the Holy Spirit who is like unto Jesus.

We know also from the scripture that personal characteristics are given to the Holy Spirit. There are three essential elements of personality. Intellect, feeling and will. All of these are used to describe the Spirit.

First intellect. 1 Corinthians 2:11 says, “No one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. It takes therefore a personality to know thoughts. This pulpit, for example, while I’ve been behind it many times, does not know my thoughts. Nor does it remember my thoughts. Nor does it have access to me because it is inanimate. It is not living.

But the Holy Spirit is the living one who has access to the thoughts of God, even the deep things of God. Romans 8:27 says also that the Holy Spirit also has access to us. He who searches our heart knows the mind of the Spirit. So the Spirit is that person who has full access to all that is in God. Yet he has full access to all that is in me. There is nothing in my life that is unknown or inaccessible to the Holy Spirit. That’s why he does such a great job at conviction.

The Holy Spirit has feelings. Ephesians 4:30 we are told explicitly “Do not grieve the Spirit.” The setting of that particular verse occurs in a context where various sins of the flesh are being described, including immorality and wrong language in the Christian’s life. Therefore Paul in wrapping that passage together when as Christians we are tempted to act like the world and talk like the world says don’t do that because that grieves the Holy Spirit. When we are tempted to listen to or to tell an off-color story or to use language which is not fitting to that of Jesus, we immediately sense that there is someone present in our life who is not pleased with what is happening and the Holy Spirit makes us aware of that in his gentle way.

The Holy Spirit also has a will. 1 Corinthians 12:11 in describing the Holy Spirit says that “He gives spiritual gifts to each as he wills.” Or as he determines. Therefore the gifts that are placed in the body of Christ and the assignment of responsibilities in the body of Christ come through the marvelous working of the Holy Spirit.

A fourth major thing that the scriptures bear witness to about the Spirit being a person is that personal acts are done by him. And there’s a long list of these. He speaks, Acts 13:2. In fact, he in speaking in that particular scripture is the initiator of the first missionary journey of the church where the Holy Spirit says “Separate for me Paul and Barnabus to the work, which I have called them.” He speaks. There have been clear distinct experiences in my life where without the Holy Spirit ever being heard audibly he has spoken so deeply within me that it was the clearest thing I ever heard.

He testifies, John 15:26. What does he testify of? He testifies concerning Jesus, his function and his role is to bear witness to the living Lord.

He teaches, John 14:26. What does he teach? He teaches that which Jesus has taught. He teaches all things concerning the Lord. That to our remembrance might be brought back the things which the Lord has communicated to us. Obviously the Spirit knows all things. His fundamental role as teacher is to make alive the person of Jesus in our lives.

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He also convicts. John 16:8-11. He convicts of sin and of righteousness and of the judgment to come.

He intercedes for us, Romans 8:26. He is our intercessor. In fact the Bible tells us that we have in Jesus Christ, an intercessor in the heavens and we have in the heart the intercessor of the Holy Spirit. Whenever we're praying for ourselves or other people are praying for us we're never praying alone. We are joined by the person of Jesus in the heavens and by the person of the Spirit in our heart. With that for us, how can we fail?

He guides us into truth, John 16:13. He directs our steps, Acts 16:6-7. He does this with Paul and Silas and Timothy as they try to go into an area of the world to preach the gospel where the Holy Spirit would not allow them. The Spirit was directing their steps.

And he is revealing God's word to us, 1 Peter 1:21 which speaks of the fact that prophecy or the written word of God did not have its origin in men but was born along with us, revealed to us by the Holy Spirit.

All these personal acts are descriptive of a person with intelligence and feeling and will.

The Spirit also as a person is in association and relationship with the Father and the Son. Jesus in Matthew 28:19 tells his disciples to "Go everywhere, baptizing people in the name of the Father, the Son and the Spirit." Notice how Jesus carefully forms the Trinitarian formula. He does not use the plural noun – names – as though Father, Son and Spirit were three different gods. But rather the one name of the one God who has revealed himself as Father, Son and Spirit. 2 Corinthians 13:14 also shows that the association and relationship with the Father and the Son, "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

The Holy Spirit also responds to personal treatment. We would expect this of a person. A person responds to other people and the Spirit responds to personal treatment.

He can be tested. Acts 5:9 as with Ananias and Sapphira who put him to the test by being dishonest.

He can be lied to, Acts 5:3. Ananias directly, Peter says, has lied to the Spirit in saying he was giving an offering when he didn't give the complete offering.

He can be grieved, Ephesians 4:30 is scripture we've already referred to as well as Isaiah 63:10 which tells us "Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit so he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them." Grieving the Spirit.

He can be resisted. Stephen says this in Acts 7:51 at the end of his great sermon to the people who were responsible for his death he says, "You resist the Spirit as did your fathers."

He can be insulted. Hebrews 10:29. And he can be blasphemed. Jesus' words. The unforgivable sin is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, Matthew 12:31-32. What blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is, is refusing what the Spirit is saying about Jesus. The Spirit is always saying to us, "Jesus is the Lord. He's the Son of God. Confess him as that." When we resist the Spirit's

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testimony of Jesus we are blaspheming against the Spirit. And there is no forgiveness, Jesus says, either in life or the age to come for a person who blasphemes the Spirit and denies the testimony the Spirit is bringing of himself.

The whole subject of blasphemy of the Spirit is a separate sermon and message.

Notice all six personal treatments of the Spirit are of a negative nature. He is a person. He can be welcomed or he can be rejected. He can be praised or he can be ignored. He can be loved or he can be resisted. He's not only a person, he is a divine person. Or he is divine-person, perhaps more accurate theologically. I am *a* person. You are *a* person. He is different from us in that he is *Divine*.

We know this from the Scripture. He bears the attributes of God. What are the characteristics of God that are not our characteristics? The scriptures make an excellent distinction between what I would call the communicable attributes of God and the non-communicable attributes of God.

The communicable attributes of God, that is the characteristics of God, which we may also have, are things like love and joy and peace and goodness and self-control. The non-communicable attributes are those aspects of the being of God, which we do not ever possess. Such as we are not all knowing. We are not and never will be all-powerful. We will never be at least in this life immutable or unchangeable. Those are characteristics that belong to God. The Spirit is described as having those characteristics. He is eternal, Hebrew 9:14 "How much more then will the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God cleanse our consciousness from acts that lead to death so that we may serve the living God." The Spirit is without beginning or without end. Even as it's said of Jesus he is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. So when we come to the Spirit he has no origin and he has no ending. He is forever and ever and ever.

He is all knowing, John 14:26. Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit "...whom the Father will send in my name will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I've said to you."

John 16:12-13 speaks of the Spirit guiding us into all truth. 1 Corinthians 2:10-11 says that "The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God, for who among men knows the thoughts of man except the Spirit within him. In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God." All knowing.

And he is all-powerful. He reveals that aspect of his nature to Mary through the angel Gabriel. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the most high will overshadow you so that the holy one that will be born of you will be called the Son of God for nothing is impossible with God." This work of the Spirit in birthing Jesus in the womb of Mary is a mark of the omnipotence of the Spirit of God.

Then he is everywhere present. Another characteristic of God. Psalm 139:7-10 "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens you are there. If I make my bed in the depths you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your right hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast." There's nowhere that we can escape from the Spirit's presence. He has the attributes of God.

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He also does the works of God. This is how we know him as divine God. He is involved in the creation. In fact the Bible opens Genesis 1:2 saying “the earth was without form and void and darkness was over the face of the deep. [and the King James text puts it this way] the Spirit of God was brooding over the face of the waters.” The newer translation says, “the Spirit was hovering over the waters.”

That is such an eloquent introduction in the scripture to the personality, the divine personality of the Spirit, in that the Spirit is always brooding over the chaos which the world was before it was created. It was this chaos, this blob of gases and liquids. The Spirit was brooding, hovering over the chaos.

What was he going to bring out of the chaos? He was going to bring the creation.

I would suggest to you that if there is a way that most eloquently describes the work of the Spirit in your life and mine is to repeat what he did in creation. That our life without God is chaos. Behind the chaos of our life the Spirit of God is wanting to create in us the personality of Jesus and to breathe into the formlessness and the void of our life, the life of Jesus. He is at work in that creation process. That’s part of his divine nature.

Psalms 104:30 “When you send your Spirit they are created and you renew the face of the earth.”

He is involved in regeneration. That is the making of the children of Adam back into the children of God. If he physically brooded over the chemical creation, the earth and brought all of that through his creative act into being, he also is at work in the spiritual creation of the inner makeup of our life.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh and I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” John 3:5-6 picking up on this new heart made by the Spirit, Jesus says, “I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of water [born naturally] and born of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Flesh gives birth to flesh but the Spirit gives birth to Spirit.” The Spirit is seeking always to birth us into the kingdom of God.

Jesus does a beautiful thing in putting together the Spirit’s work in the creation with the Spirit’s work in the personality of man. After his resurrection, when he appears to his disciples – John 20:22 – and speaks to them, “Peace” and then the scripture says “With that he breathed on them and said, “receive the Holy Spirit.” Even as God in creation bent over the lifeless form of man and breathed into him the breath of life, so Jesus fresh from the triumph of his resurrection and holding in himself the breath of eternal life bends over the form of his disciples and breathes into them that life which is eternal. Through the Spirit he says, “Receive the Spirit.” And breathes upon them the same Spirit which he had through his resurrection from the dead. It is that Spirit which we have.

The spirit I have now, the spirit that is George Wood is going to last until that day when a few men and women go out to a churchyard and all of them come back except me. There is another deeper dimension and layer to my personality which says Beyond the spirit of George Wood,

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there is co-mingled with that Spirit the eternal Spirit of God who has possessed and indwelt my nature and I am a forever child of his. That's the work of the Spirit, the work only God can do.

The Spirit also is active in giving us the scripture. 2 Timothy 3:16 "All scripture is God-breathed" the old English translation says, "All scripture is inspired." The correct translation of the Greek word is 'all scripture is expired.' That is *breathed out*. That's the literal meaning of the word. All scripture is the product of the breath of God. God breathed. The function of the Spirit is to breathe the presence of God into human life. The Bible as we have it is a result of the activity of the wind of the Spirit – God breathing out of his nature his word.

1 Peter 1:21 affirms this in saying, "the Spirit of God came upon the prophets. They did not speak through their own wisdom or understanding but spoke as the Spirit of God bore them along."

Then the fourth thing that testifies the Spirit doing the works of God, it's not only creation and regeneration and inspiration of scripture. But the Spirit also is involved in resurrection from death. Romans 8:11 "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who lives in you." The Spirit is the agent of transferring the eternal life of God to us. The Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead lives also in you and in me.

The Spirit therefore has the characteristics of God or the attributes of God, he does the work of God and he is expressly called God. Acts 5:3-4 Peter winds up saying to Ananias "You lied to the Holy Spirit," and the tag line on that is "You have not lied to man but to God."

So we have in the Spirit both someone who is person and not force. We have someone who is more than human person but who is God.

His person is further revealed to us through symbols. There are possibly six but I'm going to deal with five. Five signs or symbols of the Spirit's work.

The first is wind. In fact the very idea of Spirit is associated with that word – wind or breath. The Hebrew word is *ruach*, which is the word used to translate the English word "spirit." When you find therefore the name of the Spirit occurring in the Old Testament it is as wind or breath, the same word used in other context for those terms. In the Greek *pneuma* – or filled with air – wind or breath.

The Spirit therefore reflects that invisible essential in the life of God. Unlike you and I who have bodies the Spirit of God does not have a body. Yet his force of his personality is very much seen. In fact, if you wanted to know the real George Wood, you'd have to know his Spirit. Because his body would never tell you that. God exists in a level of being that is without body and yet is person. That personality is represented to us by wind or breath, which is everywhere present and essential for life. There is no life without breath.

The Spirit therefore as described as wind is communicating to us the eternal life of God which is breathed upon us.

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The Spirit is also represented as water. Jesus, in John 7:37-39 on the last day of the great feast which we understand to be the feast of tabernacles stood up and said, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me as the scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." You'll be like an artesian well. By this he meant the Spirit whom those who believe in him were later to receive.

What is the nature of water? We know water is essential to life. We know that water washes and we all know that water refreshes. So the Spirit is describes as water that we might also know he is essential to our life. He is the refreshing agent of God to our personalities and picks us up with joy and power in the Holy Spirit. He also is at work washing us. Convicting us of our sin, administering the cleansing life of Jesus to us.

A third sign or symbol of the Spirit is that he is represented as *seal* that is pressed upon a letter or document. Ephesians 1:13 "*You were also included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed you were marked in him with the seal, [and what is the seal?] the promised Holy Spirit.*" When you became a Christian God put the stamp of his ownership upon your life. It was the Holy Spirit that he placed upon your life that is the mark that God owns you. A seal is both a sign of ownership and it's a mark of authenticity.

In ancient days when a document was passed its authenticity was based on it matching the known seal. So the Spirit impresses upon our life. When the Spirit is given to us it marks that we are owned by God and that our lives are authentically controlled by God.

The Spirit is also represented in terms of oil. Jesus says the Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me [placed oil upon me] to preach good news." What is the Spirit seeking to do? Any of us engaged in the works of the Lord, the Spirit is coming upon us to show that he wants to especially empower us to do the work which Christ has called us to do. The mark of that official empowerment and anointing is when the oil is placed. In the Old Testament no king ever began his administration without being anointed with oil. It was the mark that the prophetic approval had been given for him to function as king. No high priest began his ministry without being first anointed with oil. Prophets as well began their ministry by being anointed with oil.

So it's not surprising when we open the book of Acts that before the church begins its ministry it is come upon by the Holy Spirit to equip it and officially let it get its ministry underway.

The Spirit wants to come upon us in that kind of way, designating us as his ambassadors in the world.

Then fifthly, the Spirit as a dove. Represented by the sign of the dove. The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in bodily form like a dove, Luke 3:22. A dove testifies to gentleness, to tenderness, and of course it is the universal sign of peace.

The Holy Spirit being represented as a dove therefore means that he does not come to us represented in any violent figure. It's important to realize that the Holy Spirit like Jesus is always the gentleman who waits for us to unlock the door to let him in to our personality. He does not force his way nor pound his way into our life. He comes gently.

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We've taken some moments to describe the person of the Spirit. But it is never sufficient to describe the Holy Spirit. It is our need to experience the Spirit. The Spirit will never be known simply by reading book about him. The Spirit will only be known as we call upon him to indwell our life and to empower our life.

I want to lose by noting in the book of Acts, four things about the Spirit in our experience. What the Spirit is doing when he comes upon us.

In entering the first chapter of the book of Acts, take a moment to recreate the scene. Jesus has ascended to heaven and the church is left, so to speak, leaderless. This is an awesome thing when the body of Christ changes leadership. It's a fragile time and it can be a very difficult and treacherous time for leadership in the body of Christ to change.

Churches have great difficulty when they go through changes in pastoral leadership for example. You can imagine through that little analogy, the trauma in the early church. Jesus hadn't been gone more than ten days before the membership had already shrunk from 500 to 120. There was a trauma in leadership transition. Those 120 had to be concerned about "Where are we going. Jesus is no longer here to lead us. What are we going to do?" The Holy Spirit comes upon that company of 120 and absolutely turns them inside out and through them revolutionizes the whole world and provides for them the kind of effective leadership that parallels the leadership of the Lord and thrusts them out in ways that the Lord had taught them the Spirit would.

The Spirit does something very dynamic with us. You can't operate the church without the Spirit. You can have programs and you can have printed bulletins and you can have organization and you can boards and you can have committees. But the church cannot function without the Holy Spirit.

And our personal lives cannot function without the Holy Spirit. We might know a lot about theology. And we might even crack our Bible on a regular basis. But unless there is that operating presence of the Spirit in our lives we are not really doing anything that is going to count in the kingdom of God. We must make ourselves available to the Spirit.

And the Spirit is pleased to make himself available to us. Look at these dimensions of the Holy Spirit in the experience of believers. Four suggestive things.

One, the Holy Spirit makes union with us without producing uniformity. If I got into everyone of your personalities and you talked like me and you thought like me and you gestured like me and you had emotions like me, you would just be clones of me. That would be no good. God does not need any more George Woods. It would be useless for me to get my spirit into anyone here. If I got my spirit in you then you'd mimic me.

But it's marvelous that when the Spirit of God gets into us we don't run around looking like clones. In fact, the scriptures says that the Spirit places great variety in the body of Christ. Varieties of ministry, variety of personality, varieties of office. All flowing out of the one Spirit. What the Spirit is doing is ministering to us the life of Jesus which is the source of our unity, bringing us into conformity with Christ likeness without making us "cookies" all cut out of the same mold. Not bringing uniformity but unity.

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The second thing the Spirit does is the Spirit tapes the potential in our life that no one or nothing else can reach.

I don't pretend to be super knowledgeable about the Holy Spirit. I try to operate with the knowledge I have. But I am not an expert in the Holy Spirit. But I know this much. I know from reading the New Testament that no single person's life is ever the same after having encountered the Holy Spirit. And that there was not a single person in the New Testament that would have ever expressed the potential in their life that came out unless the Holy Spirit had been upon them. No matter what our talents and personality are, no matter how much energy we bring to any particular assignment or task only the Holy Spirit can touch the depths of potential in our life and draw them forth for the kingdom of God.

I feel at this moment in my life that I need the Holy Spirit more than I have ever needed him before in my life. I want a new anointing of the Spirit. I want a new filling of the Spirit. I realized that I haven't been filled enough with the Spirit. I believe that there is this thing in the New Testament in regard to the filling of the Spirit that says that we are expandable and he is infinite and he is capable of giving more and we are capable of receiving more. I'll never realize the potential God has for my life unless the Spirit fills me. And unless I open myself to let him touch the potential in my life.

The way he does that is he gets hold of me in prayer. He starts saying things to me that scare the living daylights out of me. He begins to breathe to me the urgency and the vision and the message of Jesus. He lights a fire in our lives and gives us a boldness that we never had before. And challenges us and sends us out with victory and faith and force.

Every one of us needs the Spirit because without the Spirit we're never going to tap that potential. It's only done through God.

A third thing we need to know about the Spirit in our experience is that the Spirit is always leading us in two dimensions simultaneously. He's always leading us deeper into God. And he's always leading us out into the world. The Spirit's desire is to make us more spiritual. More godlike. More about Jesus. He wants to lead me deeper into God. We need to be careful when people talk to us about the deeper things of God that we know exactly what they mean by it. The deeper things of God is how to be a more loving person. How to be a more pure person. How to be a more joyful person. It's not how to be a more spooky person. It's not how to be a more smart person. It's not how to be a more super saint person so that you stick out as the pious one in the crowd. The deeper things of God are meant to impress our life more dramatically with the personality of God through Christ Jesus.

So the Spirit wants to lead us into that deeper life in God. At the same time the Spirit says don't just park in the deeper life of God because God loves the world. He gave his Son to save the world. Go. That's why Jesus says you can't go into the world unless the Spirit comes upon you, so he tells the disciples to wait until the Spirit does that. The Spirit is always pulling us in those directions.

We always feel it in worship. Isn't it interesting when you read in the Old Testament of Isaiah in chapter 6. He's worshipping the Lord and he says, "I saw him high and lifted up and his train filled the temple. He's lost in worship to God. The next thing he knows God is saying to him,

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“Isaiah who will go for me. Who will I send?” What happens is when Isaiah is caught up in worship, caught up in adoration of God, the next thing he knows God is saying I’ve got a work for you to do. When you worship God, God will point to you his work and where it is. Whether it’s in your family or in the church or in the world God will direct your heart to the work of Jesus.

Then we should say finally the Holy Spirit is indeed person and as such you can resist him or ignore him or welcome him. He waits to be received. He waits to be courted. Jesus says “Ask the Father and He will give you the Holy Spirit.”

He’s not interested in storming down the door of our life. He seeks an invitation. And an earnest one that is not just a casual thing, flippant in our life. But it is a determined course of life. We ask and seek and knock and welcome the Spirit.

Pentecostals are great in using the phrase “Are you filled with the Spirit?” That immediately makes some people defensive. “Of course I am filled with the Spirit. I spoke in tongues 30 years ago! Why would you ask me that question?” There are others who will answer “Of course I am filled with the Spirit. I hope you’re not talking about tongues. Because when I gave my life to Jesus I was filled with the Spirit.”

The scriptures lift that term in a different association than either of the first two answers relate to. If you read carefully the book of Acts and we’re going to be doing this as we go through this series you will find that time and again in the life of the disciples of Jesus at critical junctures in their life the text of Acts will say, “They were filled with the Spirit.” That filling of the Spirit is a post Pentecostal filling. It is not the filling of Acts 2. It is a filling subsequent to that. That filling inevitably occurs at a moment in their life where they are facing challenges they never faced before and a new level of power is called for in their personality that they’ve never needed to tap before. Now with the new challenge has come a new demand. There is more of them to fill and they need the fresh filling of the Spirit.

Since the Spirit is represented in terms of wind, wind dissipates. Park air in a balloon and let it set there and it will go out. The only way to keep the balloon up is to keep the fresh flow of air. The Spirit operates in that way in our life. It is not sufficient that theologically we know that when we are converted the Spirit of God indwells our life. Sure he indwells our life. No arguments with that. But it’s the experience of the Spirit today in this moment that we need. It is not simply that the Spirit came upon us when we were baptized in the Spirit, if indeed we were. It is that the Spirit in this present moment of the challenges of my life is filling me to every level of capacity that I have and indwelling me in every layer of me that I have. So that I might be filled at this moment in my life with all of God that I can take. That to the level and core of my being I might have the fullness of God which the Spirit makes present.

It’s a marvelous way to keep us out of nitpicking with one another and arguing with one another over whose more spiritual. The question is not who is more spiritual. But is the Spirit indwelling me to the level of my need and capacity in this moment.

The Spirit is all concerned with intimacy. He’s wanting to bring us into intimacy with the Lord. Not to let our experience with the Lord be something that’s happened a long time ago, but to let Jesus very personal and intimate in our lives right now. It is out of that intimacy of union with

THE PERSON OF THE SPIRIT

Life in the Spirit

the Lord, which the Spirit brings that the dynamic for service is created. We become a different kind of people because the Spirit indwells us. I want to be different from my ordinary human nature. I want there to be that aspect of my life that people can look at and say, "That's not George Wood. The only way to explain that is God."

I want us as a church to be caught up in the power of God and in the personality of the Holy Spirit. So that God might shake us as a community and conform us so totally into the image of Christ Jesus that we'll come to services that there will not be a single sick person left. There will not be a single unbeliever left unbelieving. The Holy Spirit desires to bring us into the power and personality of God. I want us in this series and this night to begin to open our life as we have never opened our life before to God and to the Holy Spirit.

Lord, when you were leaving this earth you left us someone like yourself. Another comforter, helper. You desire that the helper you sent fill us with your life. Lord, I speak for us all. I say come Holy Spirit. We need you. We need you Holy Spirit help us live pure lives. We need you Holy Spirit to help us think with the purity of Jesus. We need you Holy Spirit to give us the power to live for you at school and at work and in our family life and in our neighborhoods. We need you Holy Spirit to help us overcome the evil one and the terrible pressures of our world. We need you Holy Spirit to overcome the fears in our life. We need you to empower us and fill us with your presence. Come Holy Spirit. We swing open wide every door of our personality. Have access to rooms in our life that have been locked to you, areas of our life that are unkept and where even we have given up straightening it out. Come in Holy Spirit. Cleanse us. Purify us. Give us once more that great vitality of the living Lord. We open our hearts to you. Blessed be your name.