

The Biblical Theology of the Holy Spirit

Selected Scriptures - NCBC, January 12, 2020

Main Point: **God gives His Spirit to magnify Christ through Scripture.**

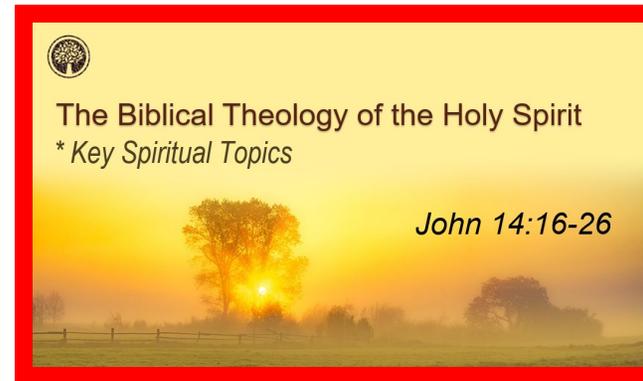
- Who is the Holy Spirit?
 - He is our God
 - He is our Helper
 - He is our Master
- How does the Holy Spirit speak today?
 - To be “led by the Spirit” = to be submitted to God’s Word for overcoming sin (Rom 8:14; Gal 5:18; c.f. *walking in the Spirit; be filled with the Spirit*)
 - To “hear Jesus’ voice” = figure of speech for being called to salvation (John 10:3-4, 6, 16, 27)
 - To receive “prophetic utterances” = to receive authoritative revelation from God through a well-recognized spokesman for God (1 Thess 5:20)
 - Through God’s Word (Heb 1:1; John 16:13-15)
- Does the Holy Spirit work miracles today?
 - Yes, for new Restoration
 - No, for new Revelation

Application: **Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly! (Colossians 3:16)**

Opening Announcements:

- **New Semester of Adult Discipleship Electives begin today!**
Check the worship folder for class listings and room locations, and get further equipped on the topic of your choice for the next 12 weeks!
- **GO Partner Update from Scott Krause** with FCA

<<All Praise to Him>>

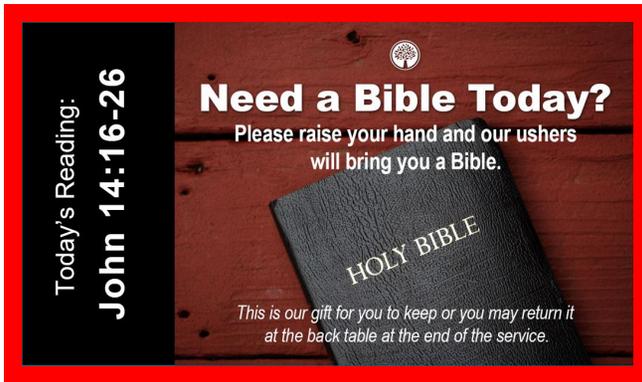


The lyrics we just sang together praised all three persons of the Godhead – Father, Son, and Spirit. It’s a fitting way to begin our study this morning on *The Biblical Theology of the Holy Spirit*.

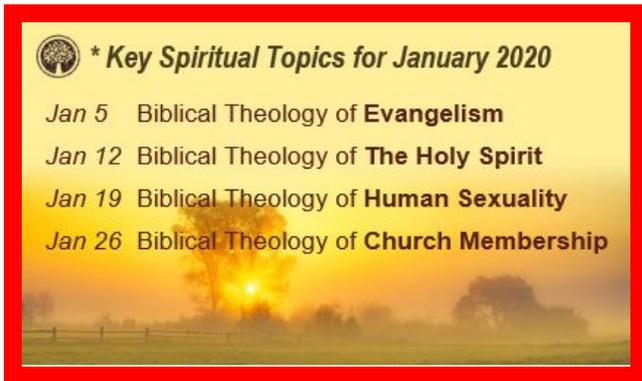
“All praise to Him, whose power imparts, the love of God within our hearts, the Spirit of all truth and peace, the fount of joy and holiness.”¹

So let’s continue our worship by opening our Bibles to **John chapter 14** this morning.

¹ Lyrics from “All Praise to Him,” Bob Kauflin and Matt Merker



If you don't have a Bible with you, simply raise your hand as we'd love to give you a Bible today! Today's Scripture reading will be taken from **John chapters 14**.



The month of January is a special time for our New Castle Church family. Each January we step away from our normal pulpit series to focus on *Key Spiritual Topics*.

Last week we introduced our vision for reaching farther together with a sermon on *The Biblical Theology of Evangelism*. Evangelism is talking to God about people, and talking to people about God.

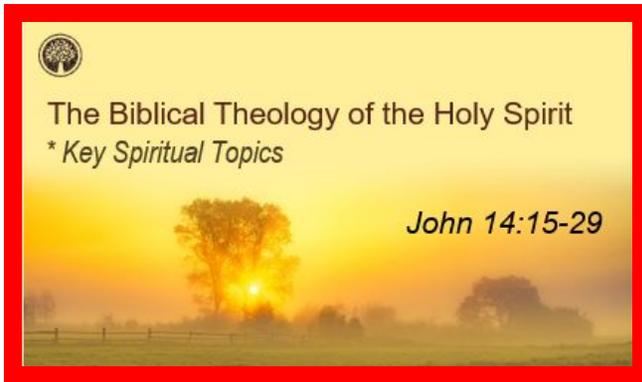
So did you pray differently this week? Did God give you an opportunity to share His forgiveness with someone?

If you didn't have an opportunity yet ...don't be discouraged, but remember that if nothing changes, nothing changes. Christ-centered evangelism begins with prayer. We must start by intentionally talking to God about our unbelieving neighbors.

Start reading *The Art of Neighboring* book you received last week. There are extra copies available in our Resource Center today if you still need a copy.



And remember from last week... Jerusalem's temple is no longer the way God communicates His glory to the world. Ever since Pentecost, the Spirit of God personally indwells Christians – the people of God – so that we would go and tell the world of His glory. The Holy Spirit indwells believers for the sake of our worship and our witness!



This is why we're following up last week's sermon with a sermon on the Holy Spirit. For our dependent submission to the Holy Spirit is necessary for any effective witness to a world dead in sin.

Now a quick warning before we dive in today. First, today is not a normal expository sermon. Today is a topical survey – a quick overview aimed to increase our understanding of the Spirit and our gratitude for His indwelling power.

Also – I'm quite aware of my inadequacy this morning. No one can fully understand God and His Spirit. He is the incomprehensible One! And yet He has revealed Himself to us through His Word.² So we approach this study with great humility and awe in our privilege of knowing God personally through His Word!

So please stand in honor of the reading of God's Word. From the English Standard Translation, I'm reading from **the gospel of John, chapter 14, starting in verse 16:**

¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

¹⁸ "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." ²² Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" ²³ Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴ Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.

²⁵ "These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

This is God's Word. Please be seated.

Let's Pray.

² Deuteronomy 29:29
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For many Christians, the Holy Spirit is either the forgotten God,³ or the freaky God.

Some Christians go about their lives and ministry in a manner seemingly disconnected from the supernatural. Their lives and relationships are not markedly different from religious Muslims or Jehovah Witnesses. Their ministry is easily explained by human skill, genius, and good old fashion hard work. For these Christians, the Holy Spirit is functionally forgotten and seemingly irrelevant to their daily experience as a Christ-follower.

Other Christians seem obsessed by the Holy Spirit. They crave the miraculous, the freaky, and are constantly focused on how they can experience the ecstasy of God's presence in a new and emotionally fresh way.

But as we come to God's self-revelation – the Holy Scriptures, our goal is not to strike some human balance between the forgotten and the freaky. Our goal this morning is to truly know God as He has revealed Himself to us through His Word. To surrender our preconceived traditions, and to humbly submit our thinking to God's Word.

You see, how we think about God truly matters. Our orthodoxy informs our orthopraxy. Worship empowers walk and witness. And so as we study God's Word we discover that,

³ C.f. Francis Chan's book titled *Forgotten God: Reversing our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit*
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God gives His Spirit to magnify Christ through Scripture.

The whole counsel of God's Word combines to make this point clear. God's Spirit magnifies Christ through Scripture. So let's begin by answering the first question on our notes page this morning,



Who is the Holy Spirit?

If you combine the witness of the Old Testament and the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is mentioned a total of 324 times in the Bible.⁴ God's Spirit is referenced from

⁴ *Biblical Doctrine*, MacArthur & Mayhue, 334.

Genesis to Revelation, with explicit references in 51% of the Old Testament books and 85% of the New Testament books.⁵

The New Testament specifically uses 8 different metaphors or word pictures to describe the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is pictured as clothing,⁶ a dove,⁷ fire,⁸ oil,⁹ a down payment,¹⁰ a seal,¹¹ water,¹² and wind.¹³

But the more you study the Scriptures, the more you realize the Spirit of God is not just an impersonal force or a picturesque metaphor. The Holy Spirit is personal and relational. He has an intellect,¹⁴ a will,¹⁵ emotions,¹⁶ and the ability to communicate with people.¹⁷ In fact, the clear testimony of Scripture is that,

⁵ *Ibid*, 334. The Holy Spirit is NOT explicitly mentioned in (OT:) Leviticus, Joshua, Ruth, Ezra, Esther, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Daniel, Hosea, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, (NT:) Philemon, James, 2 John, or 3 John.

⁶ Luke 24:49; c.f. Acts 2:1-4; Colossians 3:12-14

⁷ Matthew 3:16-17; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32

⁸ Acts 2:3; c.f. Acts 7:30-33

⁹ 2 Corinthians 1:21; 1 John 2:20, 27; C.f. Acts 10:38

¹⁰ 2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5; Ephesians 1:14

¹¹ 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13, 4:30

¹² John 7:38-39; Acts 1:5, 2:33; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Titus 3:5-6; C.f. Isaiah 32:15, 44:3; Ezekiel 39:29; Joel 2:28-29

¹³ John 3:8; Acts 2:2; 2 Peter 1:21; C.f. Ezekiel 37:9-14

¹⁴ C.f. Isaiah 11:2; John 14:17, 26, 15:26, 16:13; Romans 8:27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13

¹⁵ Genesis 6:3; Acts 7:51, 16:6-7; 1 Corinthians 12:11; Hebrews 2:4

¹⁶ Isaiah 63:10; Romans 5:5, 15:30; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; Hebrews 10:29

¹⁷ Acts 8:9, 10:19, 11:12, 13:2, 28:25; Hebrews 9:8; Revelation 2:7-3:22



He is our God.

In the mysterious Tri-unity of personhood, the Spirit and the Son and the Father of God all unite as three persons in one Godhead.¹⁸ We only have one God, but the Holy Spirit is equally God just as much as God the Father and God the Son. Scripture describes the Holy Spirit as eternal,¹⁹ holy,²⁰ all-powerful,²¹ omnipresent,²² all-knowing,²³ and full of glory²⁴ and truth.²⁵ Clearly the Holy Spirit is God!²⁶

In fact,

¹⁸ Deuteronomy 6:4

¹⁹ Hebrews 9:14

²⁰ Psalm 51:11; Isaiah 63:10-11; Matthew 1:18; Romans 1:4

²¹ Genesis 1:1-2; Luke 1:35; Romans 1:4

²² Psalm 139:7-10

²³ Isaiah 40:13; 1 Corinthians 2:10-11

²⁴ 1 Peter 4:14

²⁵ John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13

²⁶ The following Scriptures clearly associate the Holy Spirit with deity: Matthew 28:19; John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Revelation 1:4-5.

Who is the Holy Spirit?

- He is our **God** (Acts 5:3-4)

*³ But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to **lie to the Holy Spirit** and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? ⁴ While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have **not lied to man but to God.**"*

Acts 5 explicitly refers to the Holy Spirit as God. When Peter confronts Ananias he asks,

Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit...? Then he concludes saying, You have not lied to man but to God.

So make no mistake, the Holy Spirit is God Himself. This is why Jesus tried to comfort his fearful disciples about the Holy Spirit's coming on the night before the cross. Because Jesus wanted His disciples to understand that not only was the Holy Spirit God,²⁷ but,

Who is the Holy Spirit?

- He is our **God** (Acts 5:3-4)
- He is our **Helper** (Jn 14:16, 26)

He is our Helper.

The Holy Spirit is God's gift of Himself to every believer – to help us to know Him, and worship Him, and witness for Him throughout our entire life on earth.

Who is the Holy Spirit?

- He is our **God** (Acts 5:3-4)
- He is our **Helper** (Jn 14:16, 26)

*¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another **Helper**, to be with you forever, ...*

*²⁶ But the **Helper, the Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.*

In **John 14:16**, Jesus told His fearful disciples,

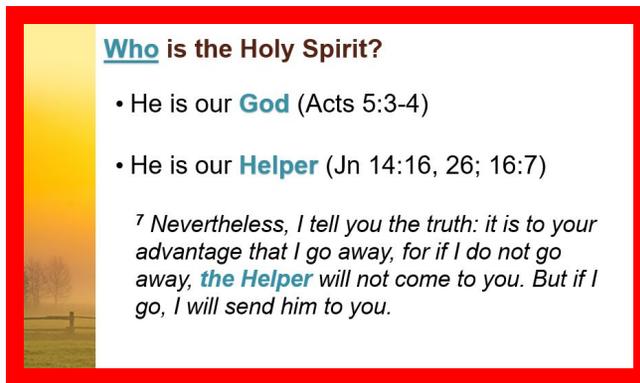
*And I will ask the Father and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever. Then **verse 26**,*

²⁷ Literally John 14:16 means "another of the same kind"

The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Now put yourself in the disciples' place – they had just lived the last 3 years walking alongside Jesus, watching all kinds of signs and wonders, listening to His teaching, and tasting the powers of the age to come!²⁸ But now Jesus looks you in the eye and tells you very clearly that He is about to die. He is about to leave you and the other disciples alone on earth.

How would you feel? Scared! Perhaps betrayed? Definitely confused, right? But Jesus says something absolutely stunning in **John 16:7**:



Who is the Holy Spirit?

- He is our **God** (Acts 5:3-4)
- He is our **Helper** (Jn 14:16, 26; 16:7)

*⁷ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, **the Helper** will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.*

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, ... it's actually better for you that I'm not here in the flesh with you.

Don't miss the wonder of Jesus' words here – the Holy Spirit is a greater help to Christ's followers than if Jesus

²⁸ Hebrews 6:4
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was actually living right beside us every day.²⁹ *For if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.*

The Holy Spirit is Emmanuel – God with us!³⁰ The living Spirit of Christ Himself³¹ dwelling *in* us! Hallelujah!!

Church – there are actually 27 different ways the Holy Spirit helps believers according to the Scripture.³² Time doesn't permit us to review all the Holy Spirit's ministries, but He convicts,³³ empowers,³⁴ gifts,³⁵ guards,³⁶ intercedes,³⁷ leads,³⁸ reminds,³⁹ sanctifies,⁴⁰ sends,⁴¹ strengthens,⁴² and teaches.⁴³ He adopts,⁴⁴ baptizes,⁴⁵

²⁹ C.f. 2 Peter 1:18-19ff where Peter says it's actually better to possess the full canon of Holy Scripture than to personally experience the transfiguration of Christ with Moses and Elijah.

³⁰ C.f. Matthew 1:23; c.f. John 14:17; 2 Corinthians 6:16-18

³¹ Acts 5:9; 8:39; 16:7; Romans 8:9; Galatians 4:6; Philippians 1:19; 1 Peter 1:11

³² C.f. *Biblical Doctrine*, MacArthur & Mayhue, 340.

³³ John 16:8-11

³⁴ Acts 1:8

³⁵ 1 Corinthians 12:7

³⁶ 2 Timothy 1:14

³⁷ Romans 8:26-27; Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20

³⁸ Psalm 143:10; Matthew 4:1; Mark 1:12; Luke 4:1; Acts 20:22-23; Romans 8:14

³⁹ John 14:26

⁴⁰ Romans 15:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2

⁴¹ Acts 13:4

⁴² Ephesians 3:16

⁴³ John 14:26; Acts 15:28; 1 John 2:20, 27

⁴⁴ Romans 8:15

⁴⁵ 1 Corinthians 12:13

guarantees,⁴⁶ and assures⁴⁷ all true Christians. He gives life,⁴⁸ and produces spiritual fruit.⁴⁹

The Holy Spirit is God Himself dwelling in the Christian – for the sake of our spiritual intimacy with God, our freedom from sin, and our empowered witness to the world!!

So then, why do you and I so often live as if there's no Holy Spirit inside us? Why do we quench⁵⁰ or neglect or grieve God's Spirit in us? Why do we so quickly forget that the Holy Spirit is our God, our Helper, and,

Who is the Holy Spirit?

- He is our **God** (Acts 5:3-4)
- He is our **Helper** (Jn 14:16, 26; 16:7)
- He is our **Master** (Rom 8:14; Eph 5:18)

our Master? Since the living Spirit of our Lord⁵¹ dwells within us, our entire life and thinking should be submitted to His control, right?

⁴⁶ 2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5; Ephesians 1:13-14

⁴⁷ Romans 8:16; 1 John 3:24

⁴⁸ John 3:5-6, 8; 6:63; Titus 3:5

⁴⁹ Galatians 5:22-23, c.f. 5:16, 18, 25

⁵⁰ 1 Thessalonians 5:19; c.f. Ephesians 4:30

⁵¹ Judges 3:10; Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18; 2 Corinthians 3:18

In fact, this is what Scripture means when it commands Christians to be filled with the Spirit, or be led by the Spirit.

Who is the Holy Spirit?

- He is our **God** (Acts 5:3-4)
- He is our **Helper** (Jn 14:16, 26; 16:7)
- He is our **Master** (Rom 8:14; Eph 5:18)

¹⁴ For all who are *led by the Spirit of God* are sons of God. ... ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but *be filled with the Spirit.*

Romans 8:14 teaches, *All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*⁵²

Ephesians 5:18 says not to be controlled by wine, but instead *be filled with the Spirit*. In other words, the indwelling Spirit is the controller or leader for all God's children. He is our master.

Now if you've zoned out for a minute – I need your attention right now. This is so important. **Romans 8:14** is not a verse about guidance or decision-making.

Romans 8 is in the context of spiritual growth, not decision making. **Romans 8** is in the context of putting to death the deeds of the body. So to be led by the Spirit is to be submitted to the Spirit, or to be filled with the Spirit, as **Ephesians 5** teaches.⁵³

⁵² C.f. Galatians 5:18

⁵³ This same meaning is expressed in Galatians by the phrase "Walking by the Spirit" or "crucifying the flesh."

I want to press this point because there's so much confusion about the Holy Spirit's guidance of believers today.⁵⁴ The Holy Spirit is not a mystical genie on your shoulder that uses whispers or internal promptings to tell you whether to walk right or left.⁵⁵ The Holy Spirit uses the Words of Christ to help us crucify our flesh. To be led by the Spirit means the Spirit is causing you to obey Christ's Words.

We clearly see the meaning of **Ephesians 5:18** by comparing its context to the parallel passage in **Colossians 3:16**.

Filled with the Spirit = Ruled by God's Word	
Ephesians 5:17 – 6:20	Colossians 3:5 – 4:6
Love & Holiness 5:1-17	Love & Holiness 3:5-15
Be filled (controlled) with the Spirit 5:18	Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly 3:16a
Singing & Thanks 5:19-21	Singing & Thanks 3:16b-17
Wives 5:22-24	Wives 3:18
Husbands 5:25-33	Husbands 3:19
Children 6:1-4	Children 3:20-21
Employees 6:5-8	Employees 3:22-25
Employers 6:9	Employers 4:1
Relations w/ World 6:10-20	Relations w/ World 4:2-6

Both **Ephesians** and **Colossians** were written by Paul from a Roman prison around the same time,⁵⁶ and trace a similar line of argument. In fact, when you compare

⁵⁴ For further study on biblical decision-making, I'd highly recommend: *Just Do Something* by Kevin DeYoung; *Decision Making and the Will of God* by Garry Friesen; *Decisions, Decisions* by Dave Swavely; *Step by Step* by James Petty; or *Found: God's Will* by John MacArthur.

⁵⁵ I highly recommend the 3-part article entitled "Does God Whisper" at <https://www.str.org/publications/does-god-whisper-part-1> for further study.

⁵⁶ Circa 60-62 A.D.

Ephesians 5 and 6 with **Colossians 3 and 4** the only significant difference is that in **Ephesians 5:18** Paul commands the believers to *be filled with the Spirit*, while in **Colossians 3:16** Paul commands them to *let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly*. Therefore we conclude that to be filled with the Spirit means to let the word of Christ dwell in you richly! To be controlled by God's Spirit means to submit to the words of Christ! Here's the point:

Who is the Holy Spirit?

- He is our **God** (Acts 5:3-4)
- He is our **Helper** (Jn 14:16, 26; 16:7)
- He is our **Master** (Rom 8:14; Eph 5:18)

The Holy Spirit is our God, our Helper, and our Master. We quench or grieve the Holy Spirit whenever we resist His control or disobey Christ's Words.

The filling of the Holy Spirit is not a one-time anointing... it is the continuous ongoing relationship of submission to the Spirit's control in the Christ-follower's life. Do you understand then why we say then that the Holy Spirit is to be our master?

So let me ask you, what's your personal relationship with God's Spirit?

Ironically, when we think about the Holy Spirit, we are often like Simon the magician in **Acts chapter 8** who

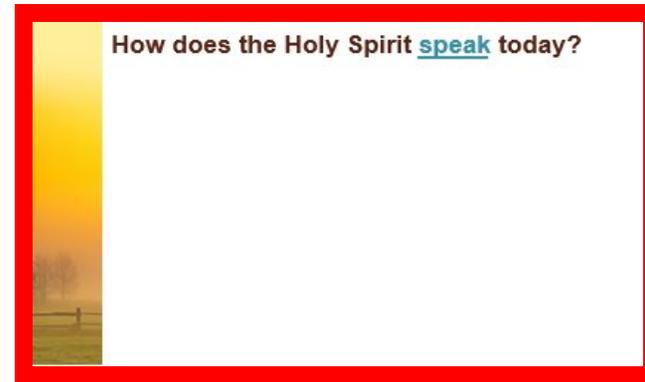
wanted to purchase the Holy Spirit from Peter for the sake of his own power and reputation.⁵⁷ We want the Spirit's gifts, more than the Spirit's fruit. We desire to see His power in our ministry more than in our character.

But a biblical study reveals that God gives His Spirit to magnify Christ, not us. Do you believe the Holy Spirit is God Himself? Have you experienced His help by being born again and coming to understand Christ's Words? Are you submitted to the Spirit's control as you progressively grow in the obedience of faith and the loving fruit of the Spirit in your life?

If not dear friend... today is a day of salvation for you. Please repent of your sins, believe on the death and resurrection of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins, and submit yourself entirely to the Spirit's control. For there is no spiritual life apart from a personal relationship with God's indwelling Spirit!⁵⁸

Now with that brief overview of the Holy Spirit, I want to spend the rest of our time this morning answering two common questions.

First,



How does the Holy Spirit speak today?

It is quite common today to hear people say, "God told me that I should..." Or "I heard God voice last night telling me that I need to ..." Or "Go and get quiet and listen for God's still small voice." In fact, there are some Christian books and authors who are very popular today which advance the idea that the Holy Spirit somehow speaks personally and privately to believers apart from God's Word.⁵⁹

I want you to know that this is a very personal topic for me. I grew up in a religious culture where signs and wonders were common. There were many times when I would have told you I heard God speak personally to me in all kinds of ways. But our personal experiences are not a reliable authority to determine truth. We must examine God's all-sufficient Word to see how the Holy Spirit speaks today.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Probably one of the most popular authors in this vein is Sarah Young and her *Jesus Calling* series. C.f.

<https://www.challies.com/book-reviews/jesus-calling/> and <https://www.challies.com/articles/10-serious-problems-with-jesus-calling/>.

⁶⁰ 2 Peter 1:3-4, 19-21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

⁵⁷ Acts 8:9-11, 18-24

⁵⁸ 1 John 4:13

Let's first clear up some possible confusion. We've already clarified today that,

How does the Holy Spirit speak today?

- To be "**led by the Spirit**" = to be submitted to God's Word for overcoming sin (Rom 8:14; Gal 5:18; c.f. *walking in Spirit; be filled with Spirit*)

To be "led" by the Spirit means to be submitted to God's Word, or to let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly. To be led by the Spirit equates to walking in the Spirit,⁶¹ or being filled or controlled by the Spirit. It's not referring to personal decision-making or guidance, but growing spiritually by crucifying fleshly passions and desires.⁶²

But what about Jesus' words in **John chapter 10**, where He teaches that *His sheep hear His voice*?

⁶¹ Galatians 5:16, 25

⁶² Galatians 5:24

How does the Holy Spirit speak today?

- To be "**led by the Spirit**" = to be submitted to God's Word for overcoming sin (Rom 8:14; Gal 5:18; c.f. *walking in Spirit; be filled with Spirit*)
- To "**hear Jesus' voice**" = figure of speech for being called to salvation (John 10:3-4, 6, 16, 27)

As you read through **John 10**, you'll notice that **verse 6** makes it very clear that "hearing Jesus' voice" is a figure of speech that refers to unbelievers being called to salvation. In the context of **John 10**, to hear Jesus' voice has nothing to do with the question of whether or not the Holy Spirit speaks today to believers.

Of course some believe that the Holy Spirit speaks today through the spiritual gift of prophecy.⁶³

How does the Holy Spirit speak today?

- To be "**led by the Spirit**" = to be submitted to God's Word for overcoming sin (Rom 8:14; Gal 5:18; c.f. *walking in Spirit; be filled with Spirit*)
- To "**hear Jesus' voice**" = figure of speech for being called to salvation (John 10:3-4, 6, 16, 27)
- To receive "**prophetic utterances**" = to receive authoritative revelation from God through a recognized spokesman for God (1 Thess 5:20)

⁶³ For a careful exegetical study of the spiritual gift of prophecy, I highly recommend Dr. David Farnell's article, "The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament" available at <https://www.tms.edu/msj/msj25-2-6/>.

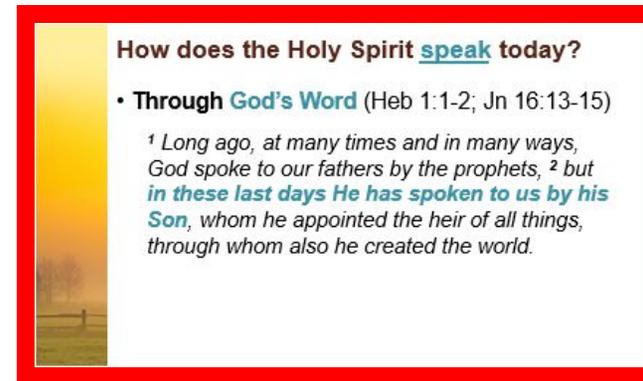
In fact the book of **Acts** records 16 times over 30 years when the Holy Spirit communicated a specific desire to an individual.⁶⁴ Obviously **Acts** represents the foundational Apostolic period⁶⁵ when Scripture was still being breathed out and given to the early church. And during the apostolic era, **to receive “prophetic utterances” was to receive authoritative revelation from God through a recognized spokesman for God.** So this is what **1 Thessalonians 5:20** is referring to when Paul instructs the church *do not despise prophetic utterances*. Paul wasn't speaking about private communication from the Holy Spirit to an individual. He wasn't speaking of personal insights about someone else's future. He was exhorting the church to take seriously the revelation of Scripture that had already been given to them through the apostles. Whenever the Holy Spirit speaks prophetic utterances, His prophecy will always be 100% accurate and infallible as the very words of God.⁶⁶

In brief, as we study God's Word, we discover the primary way the Holy Spirit speaks today is,

⁶⁴ Acts 1:4, 24-26; 5:19-20; 8:26, 29; 9:4-6, 10-16; 10:3-6, 19-20; 12:7-8; 13:2; 16:9-10; 18:9-10; 21:4; 22:18-21. For further study, please consult <https://www.str.org/articles/divine-direction-decision-making-in-the-book-of-acts>.

⁶⁵ Ephesians 2:20

⁶⁶ Deuteronomy 18:22; Jeremiah 29:8-9



Through God's Word.

Not through angelic visions. Not through signs, or promptings, or circumstances. After all, as one pastor stated, “Sometimes open doors lead to elevator shafts!”⁶⁷

Now of course... God absolutely uses circumstances and experiences and people. He is sovereign after all!⁶⁸ But God doesn't *speak* through people or circumstances.⁶⁹

As **Hebrews 1** says, *Long ago, God spoke to our fathers through the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son.*⁷⁰ His revealed Scripture is all-sufficient for life and godliness.⁷¹ Our faith has once and for all been delivered to the saints in the Holy Scriptures.⁷²

⁶⁷ Jay Adams

⁶⁸ Proverbs 21:1; Daniel 4:34-35

⁶⁹

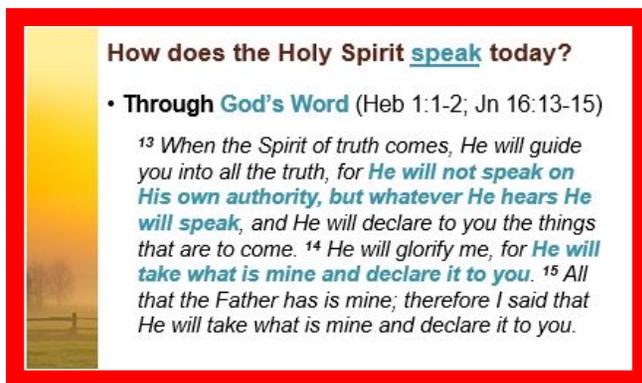
<https://www.challies.com/christian-living/how-does-god-speak-to-me-today/>

⁷⁰ Hebrews 1:1

⁷¹ 2 Peter 1:3-4; 2 Timothy 3:15-17

⁷² Jude 1:3

Now this doesn't put God in a box. Remember, our goal is simply to study God's Word and let the Scriptures determine our beliefs about God and His relationship with us. The Holy Spirit clearly has the power to speak audibly to any of us as He has done at rare times throughout biblical history.⁷³ But I find Jesus' words to His disciples in **John chapter 16** particularly insightful on this question.



How does the Holy Spirit speak today?

- **Through God's Word** (Heb 1:1-2; Jn 16:13-15)
¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for He will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that He will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Notice how Jesus says the Holy Spirit will speak when He comes,

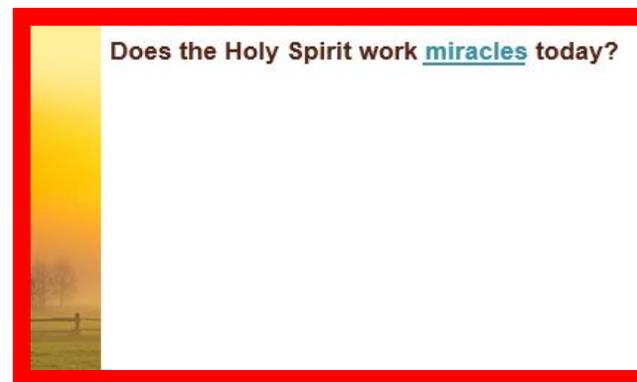
*¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.*⁷⁴

⁷³ I.e. Exodus 3:14; Joshua 1:1; Judges 6:18; 1 Samuel 3:11; 2 Samuel 2:1; Job 40:1; Isaiah 7:3; Jeremiah 1:7; Acts 8:26; 9:15; etc.

⁷⁴ John 16:13-15

To me this is clear. The Holy Spirit absolutely speaks today...but His speaking is to guide and teach us in God's Word. He will not speak on His own authority. He only speaks what has already been spoken.⁷⁵ In other words, when the Holy Spirit speaks today, He is helping us understand,⁷⁶ or remember,⁷⁷ or obey⁷⁸ the Scripture!! God gives His Spirit to magnify Christ through Scripture!

Now let's quickly consider our final question for this morning,



Does the Holy Spirit work miracles today?

Does the Holy Spirit work miracles today?

A miracle is any supernatural occurrence that cannot be explained by God's normal working through natural processes. Throughout Scripture, we see the most

⁷⁵ For example, In Hebrews 3:7 the Holy Spirit says in the present tense a quote from Psalm 95. It's not just that the Spirit spoke when Psalm 95 was originally inspired, but the Holy Spirit is speaking and continues to speak every time this Scripture is recalled.

⁷⁶ John 14:26, 15:26; 1 Corinthians 2:10-11

⁷⁷ John 14:26

⁷⁸ Romans 8:3-6, 9-16

frequent miracles clustered around the times of Moses, Elijah, and Jesus and the Apostles.⁷⁹ Interestingly, these three eras of time correspond to the giving of the Law, the Prophets, and the New Testament Scriptures. And that makes sense since God never uses miracles as an end to themselves; miracles always point to something greater. God uses the miraculous to authenticate His message or His messenger, or to give a taste of His future Kingdom powers still to come.⁸⁰

So our question is to what extent should we expect the Holy Spirit to work miracles in the church today?

Now, what we've already learned today should help answer this question. After all, the Holy Spirit is God. He is God with us. And He is the Spirit of our Lord.

Therefore we should not be surprised at all to answer this question,

⁷⁹ For an in-depth exegetical study of miracles and God's Kingdom, I'd highly recommend Dr. Vlach's article, "God's Kingdom and the Miraculous" available at <https://www.tms.edu/msj/msj25-2-5/>.

⁸⁰ Hebrews 6:4; c.f. Isaiah 35:5-7 and Matthew 11:4-6. Also Matthew 4:23-24; 12:22-28. Interestingly Revelation 11:3-6 tells us how the two witnesses (Moses and Elijah?) will again perform all kinds of miracles on the earth after the church has been raptured in order to attest to the coming Kingdom of God for Israel. But these signs and wonders are not to be expected during our present church age.



Yes, the Spirit works miracles today for new Restoration!

Church – we worship a God of miracles!⁸¹ He is not like any of us!⁸² Our God is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-wise, and full of grace and mercy!



Therefore, every time a spiritually dead⁸³ soul comes awake to newness of life – that is a profound miracle of God's Spirit among us!! Every time a sinner is

⁸¹ C.f.

<https://www.challies.com/book-reviews/god-performs-miracles-today/>

⁸² Psalm 50:21

⁸³ Ephesians 2:1-3; Ezekiel 37

supernaturally empowered to love God,⁸⁴ and love other sinners, and forgive others as he has first been forgiven – Wow! Church – All glory to God!

Every time a sexual addict or a materialistic workaholic is set free from their slavery to sin – that’s the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit! Every time the church prays and one of its members receives a physical healing that the doctors can’t explain – that’s a miracle of God’s restoration as He gives us a small taste of the powers of the age to come!

Without a doubt, God’s Spirit is actively working miracles for restoration today!!

But we must remember – God calls us to pursue Him – not what He can do for us. Many evil people seek miraculous signs for self-serving reasons.⁸⁵ Miracles are gifts, not promised rewards for those with enough faith. The Holy Spirit is not our butler! The Spirit helps us accomplish God’s purposes for our life, not our own. God gives His Spirit to magnify Christ through Scripture in us.

And that’s why the Holy Spirit does not work miracles today,

⁸⁴ 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:3; c.f. Ephesians 3:16-19

⁸⁵ Matthew 12:39; 16:4; John 6:26; 1 Corinthians 1:22



for new **Revelation**. Beware of anyone who claims that the Holy Spirit has miraculously revealed new truth to them. This is the spirit of the false prophets.⁸⁶



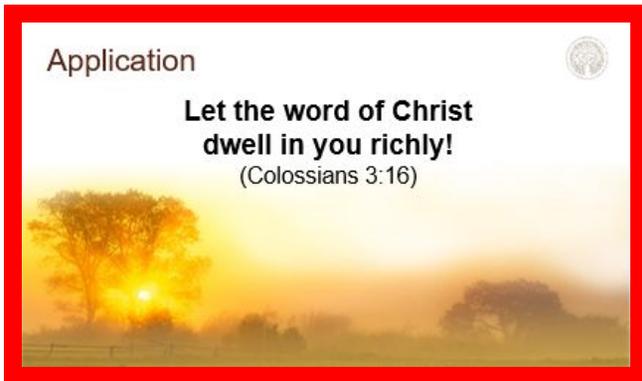
The Scripture is sufficient, and complete, and more trustworthy than miraculous experiences. The Scriptures have already been authenticated by many signs and wonders during the days of Moses, Elijah, Jesus, and the Apostles. God has mercifully given us everything that we need in order to know Him personally and securely in Christ.

⁸⁶ 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 2:18; 4:1



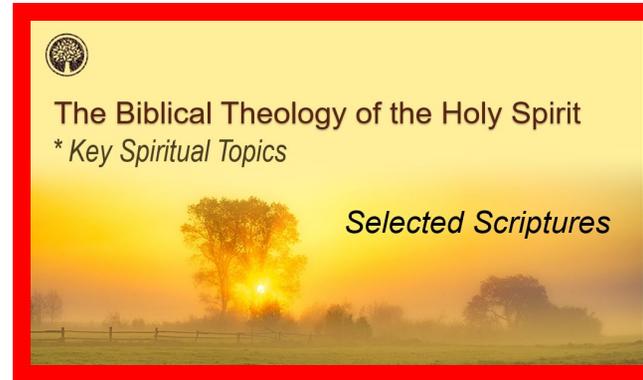
After all, God gives His Spirit to magnify His Son through His Word. Christ's followers are not called Spirit-ists... we are called Christ-ians... for the Holy Spirit in us is radically Christ-centered...always seeking to magnify Christ.

So then,



Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly! We must not neglect or grieve the Spirit of the Living Christ who is in us! We are a most blessed people! God is with us! And He desires to help us know Him personally, as He sanctifies and secures us through the ministry of His

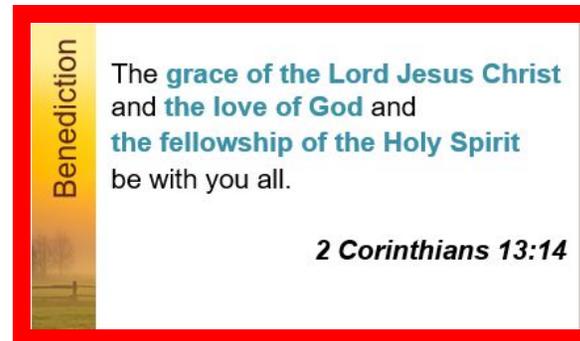
all-sufficient Word! Hallelujah – what a God is our God!!



Let's pray.

<<Be Thou My Vision>>

Let's pray our benediction together as we dismiss.



The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. 2 Corinthians 13:14

Recommended Resources on the Holy Spirit:

- Psalm 104:30; 139:7-10
- Matthew 28:19
- Luke 1:35
- John 3:7-8; 14:15-18, 25-26; 15:16-27; 16:7-15
- Acts 5:3-4
- Romans 8:9-11, 14-27
- 1 Corinthians 2:10-11; 12:11, 18
- 2 Corinthians 13:14
- Galatians 5:16-26
- Ephesians 4:30
- Colossians 3:15-17
- 1 Thessalonians 5:19
- Hebrews 9:14
- 1 John 2:27

- "Peace for Anxious Hearts – Part 2" sermon on John 14:15-31 preached 10-23-16 at NCBC
- "The Advantage of the Holy Spirit" sermon on John 16:5-15 preached 11-20-16 at NCBC
- "The Spirit-Controlled Life" sermon on Galatians 5:16-26 preached 7-16-17 at NCBC
- "The Expectant Church – Part 2" sermon on 1 Peter 4:7-11 preached 9-16-18 at NCBC

- <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/how-to-recognize-the-holy-spirit>
- <https://www.gty.org/library/strangefire>
- <http://www.cessationism.com/>

- He Who Gives Life, Graham Cole
- Forgotten God, Francis Chan
- The Holy Spirit, Billy Graham

Growing Deeper: Life Group Questions

1. Review Galatians 5:22-23. Many people claim to be spiritual based on their gifts, rather than their fruit. How does Galatians help us rightly define spirituality? What are the differences between natural abilities and/or temperaments and the fruit of the Spirit?
2. Read John 14:26-27. How does God's Spirit give you peace? Discuss how you keep God's Spirit from becoming "The Forgotten God" in your life.
3. Read Galatians 5:16-25, Ephesians 5:15-21, and Colossians 3:15-17. How do we practice the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives?
4. Do you practically neglect the Holy Spirit in any way? How? Why? Read Ephesians 4:30 and 1 Thessalonians 5:19. What would it look like for you to grieve or quench the Holy Spirit?
5. Read John 16:13-15. How is the guidance ministry of the Holy Spirit described? Does the Holy Spirit ever speak independently of God's Word?