

Fil-Am Community Church

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Key verse: Matthew 28:19, *"...in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..."*

"The Holy Spirit"

There was this little boy in Sunday School who was off by himself drawing feverishly with a blue crayon on bright yellow construction paper while the other children were listening to a Bible story. One of the teachers noticed little Johnny was not with the other children and walked over to him and said, "Johnny, what are you doing?" to which Johnny said, "I'm drawing a picture of God." The teacher said, "But Johnny, no one knows what God looks like." Without missing a beat Johnny kept drawing and said, "They will when I get finished."

When we talk about God most people think about God the Father and perhaps they picture Him on His throne, dressed in robes of white with a long flowing beard. Others, when they think of God, think of Jesus, and everyone at one time or another has seen what some artist thinks Jesus must have looked like, but when someone mentions the Holy Spirit what comes to mind? What comes to your mind? How do you picture the Holy Spirit? More importantly, how do you understand the work of the Holy Spirit to be?

Today, as we continue our series called "Foundations", we come to the fourth message on the fundamental teachings of our faith. Today we will

concentrate our thoughts on the doctrine of God the Holy Spirit, often referred to as Pneumatology, meaning, the study of the Holy Spirit.

The fact of the matter is that many Christians know a lot about Jesus, they understand less about God the Father but God the Holy Spirit is somewhat of a mystery to them. They have heard about Him, sang about Him and read scriptures where He is mentioned, but the reality is, their understanding of His person and His work remain somewhat obscure in their minds.

This was a problem even during the apostles' time. Paul was traveling from city to city in the ancient world, preaching the gospel and starting churches. When he came to Ephesus, he was happily surprised to find that there was already a small group of believers there. They had been baptized and were trying to live a Christian life. But, as Paul got acquainted with them, he asked if they had received the Holy Spirit. They said they had never heard of the Holy Spirit.

So, lots of modern Christians have something in common with them. Yes, they have heard of the Holy Spirit. Many repeat creeds that say, "I believe in the Holy Spirit". But they have little understanding of what that means. Some are a little bit afraid of the Holy Spirit. Probably because they've heard of terms like slain by the Spirit or Holy Laughter.

The purpose of our study this morning will be to try and come to a better understanding of how God the Holy Spirit reveals Himself to us through His word.

Again, since the Holy Spirit is fully God, it would be impossible for us to be exhaustive in our scope so, because of our limited time I will try and

show you several things about the Holy Spirit about which every believer should be aware.

First, let's look at the nature of the Holy Spirit.

I. The Nature of the Holy Spirit

Many people think, even some who claim they're Christians, that the Holy Spirit is merely the power of God, inanimate, and, therefore, an "It". You know, like the force in Stars Wars or like electricity that has no personality. This is what many people in pseudo-Christian religions believe and teach like the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons, the Iglesia ni Cristo, and a host of others. The Bible tells us differently. The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit is a person.

A. He is a Person

In fact, throughout the Bible, the Holy Spirit is referred to as a "he". You don't say that about a force or energy.

Jesus Christ and his apostles speak of him like he is a person, because he is a person. A person has intellect or mind, feelings or emotions, and will. And the Holy Spirit possesses all these three things.

1. Intellect

With regards to intellect, for example, the Bible says in 1 Cor. 2:11, *"For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God."*

An "It" does not know the thoughts of God. The Holy Spirit is living and has access to the deep things of God

2. Feelings

With regards to feelings, Ephesians 4:30 says, *“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”* Now, the context of that verse is about the admonition of Paul to Christians to refrain from immorality and unwholesome language. You see, when we act and talk like the world it grieves the Holy Spirit. When we gossip, lie, slander, tear down, we immediately sense the presence of someone who is not pleased with what’s happening. It grieves him... he has feelings – he is a person. Obviously, you cannot grieve electricity. In the Philippines, there’s always black-outs and you’ll hear people cuss because of this and electricity doesn’t get hurt by it at all.

3. Will

And with regards to the will, 1 Cor. 12:11 (NLT) says, *“It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone **decides** which gift each person should have.”* Making a decision is something you will.

So, there’s no doubt that the Holy Spirit is a person, the same way that God the Father and His Son Jesus are persons. This brings us to the other nature of the Holy Spirit and that is,

B. He is the Third Person in the Trinity

Without doubt, the Trinity is one of the most difficult doctrines to understand. It is the one thing that most cults like the Jehovah’s Witness will use to bait you into their lair. They will say, “Come, let us reason together” and, in fact, even quote Isaiah 1:18 where God says to the Israelites, “Come now, let us reason together” but actually quote it out of context because God is talking about forgiveness of sins. So, the cults will say that the teaching of

the Trinity is not logical. Because $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$ and not 1. They will appeal to human logic and reasoning. They even say that Protestants believe in a Three-headed God or this teaching is from the devil. And, of course, they will quote verses out of context in order to prove their point. The Jehovah's Witnesses even produced their own version of the Bible called "The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures" which, of course, is slanted toward their favor. Like John 1:1 which they translate as "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was a god" just to avoid saying that Jesus is God. And in Corinthians their Bible inserts the word "other" in verses where Jesus is mentioned as the Creator like in Colossians 1:16 where it says, "For by him all things were created". Their translation says, "For by him all (other) things were created" to imply that Jesus is the first creation of God.

Now, all of this is foolishness. We can cite verse after verse to prove that the Bible teaches the Trinity. But we won't dwell on that at this point. The Trinity deserves a full sermon by itself.

So, the Holy Spirit is the third person in the Trinity. The fact that the Holy Spirit is God is clearly seen in many Scriptures, including Acts 5:3-4, *"Then Peter said, 'Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? 4 Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God.'*" So, Peter said to Ananias that lying to the Holy Spirit is the same as lying to God. We can also know that the Holy Spirit is God because He possesses the characteristics of

God. For example, His omnipresence is seen in Psalm 139:7-8, *“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.”* Then in 1 Corinthians 2:10-11, we see the characteristic of omniscience in the Holy Spirit. *“But God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.”*

Let us now come to the work of the Holy Spirit. Let me share with you some of the things that the Holy Spirit does.

II. The Work of the Holy Spirit

First, let me say that theologians often divide the work of the Trinity this way:

God the Father is the Source of all things.

God the Son is the Channel of all things.

God the Spirit is the Agent of all things.

As the Source, all things flow from the Father’s will. As the Channel, all of God’s blessing flow to us through Jesus Christ the Son. But it is the Holy Spirit who acts as the Agent of the Almighty, who actually carries out the directives of the Father.

I’ve been amazed to discover that the Holy Spirit is everywhere in the Bible. The first mention is in Genesis 1:2, *“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.”* and the last mention of the Spirit is in Revelation

22:17, *“The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.”*

So, he’s present at the moment of creation and he’s there at the very end of the Bible. In the Old Testament you see the Holy Spirit coming with great power upon kings, priests, judges and military leaders. He is also the one who inspired the poets to sing and gave the prophets a message to proclaim. He is the cloud by day and the fiery pillar by night that led Israel through the wilderness. He was the spirit that lifted Ezekiel when the people were in captivity. He was also the one who enabled Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple.

When you come to the New Testament, you see him at work especially in the life of Christ. Our Lord was conceived by the Holy Spirit, who came upon him at his baptism, who led him into the wilderness, who filled him with power to work miracles, who bore witness that he was the Son of God until at a certain point, when Jesus was nearing the day of his death, he said something to his disciples. In John 14:16 he said, *“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever”*. Jesus was referring to the Holy Spirit who he will send to the apostles after he died. Note he says that the Holy Spirit will be with them forever, meaning, He will never leave them. This was unlike before where the Holy Spirit came and went. This time, the Holy Spirit will be with them and in them. This happened on Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came down on the praying disciples in tongues of fire. And this applies to every believer in Christ. Of course, I’m sure if Jesus gave them a choice, they would vote hands-down

that Jesus would stay with them, rather than leave them and go to heaven. But Jesus said it was better that he would go. *“But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”* (John 16:7)

As a human being with flesh and blood on earth, Jesus could be with only one or maybe a few of them at a time. But the Holy Spirit, who he sent, would be with all of them all of the time.

So, what are some of the things that Holy Spirit does in the life of the believer and even among unbelievers?

First,

A. **He teaches** – Jesus says in John 14:26, *“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”* Have you ever been in a situation wherein you were asked a question about the Bible and you blurted out an answer that surprised you? How in the world did I come up with that answer? That my friend was the Holy Spirit at work. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit will teach you. All things.

I remember, I was in Frankfurt, Germany, having a serious religious back and forth with my uncle who was a member of a New Age religion. He was trying to convince me that Jesus was not God, that he was just a good teacher, a prophet at best. I remember my mind feeling like it was giving in. My uncle was a very articulate speaker, mind you. He is bright. And I prayed, “Lord, please protect my mind. And help me to introduce you to him”. Suddenly, I felt like I was wearing a helmet, I felt like my mind was now being protected, and every word he said was just bouncing off the helmet.

Then, a passage in Scripture came to my mind. It was the time after the resurrection of Jesus when he showed himself to his disciples and Thomas, upon seeing the wounds on Jesus' hands said, "My Lord and my God". So, I said to my uncle, "Uncle George, why would Thomas say to Jesus "My Lord and my God" if he thought Jesus wasn't God? Then, my eloquent uncle suddenly became tongue-tied. He stuttered and stammered.

In the end, he just bade goodbye. He was in a hurry, looking confused. Folks, I had no doubt the Holy Spirit worked to remind me of what Jesus said in his word.

But not only this, it is also the Holy Spirit who helps us to understand certain difficult passages in the Bible.

B. He intercedes – there are times when we pray that our hearts are so heavy that we don't know what to say, the words don't come out so easily. The Holy Spirit helps us to pray. He intercedes for us. Romans 8:26 says, *"The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express."* Even when we don't know how to pray, the Spirit prays the perfect will of God.

Let me tell you another story. I just arrived in Hawaii. It was the first day of my missionary training under YWAM. I went to my assigned room in the hostel, carrying my bags with me, and found another guy who was sharing the room with me. His name is Hiroo, a Japanese. We talked a little bit and then he left to go to the hall where all trainees are supposed to assemble for our welcome session. I put down my bags on my bed and I was about to leave, when suddenly I felt a heavy burden in my heart for this

Japanese guy who I just met. I didn't know why and I asked God why but God just impressed on me to pray for him. I had no choice because the burden was so heavy that I fell down on my knees and started praying. I just prayed for him in general terms and I was actually weeping as I prayed. There were moments when I was just mumbling because I didn't know what to pray for. I think I prayed for about thirty minutes for him.

Hiroo became a good friend of mine. We would eat together, take long walks together, played tennis together, but he alone gave me a massage. He was an expert Japanese masseur. God used him, in fact, to provide for me because he would sometimes buy me stuff that I couldn't afford.

And, you know, Japanese are quite rich, even though they're missionaries. All throughout this time, I continued to pray for him not exactly knowing what to pray for. And he didn't know about it.

Then, one afternoon, as I entered our room, I saw him lying on his bed, crying. I asked him why and he told me his story. He said that he was actually doing the YWAM training for the second time. The first time was in Tokyo. In Tokyo, during his training, he met and fell in love with another trainee. Now, one of the rules in the training, and they're very strict about it, is that no one could have any relationship with another trainee. This is to prevent distractions. Hiroo and this girl, however, had a relationship. When it was discovered, they were asked to break it off. They couldn't, however, and they were asked to leave.

Now, one year after, God led Hiroo to another training. And Hiroo said that he was actually having a hard time again. This time, not because of a girl, but because of the language barrier. Hiroo is not fluent in English and

he found the lessons difficult to learn. He said he needed a lot of prayers. That's when it hit me that that's the reason for my prayers for him. Because of this realization, I prayed for him with much more fervency and this time with focus.

Hiroo made it through the training. After our training I went to California while Hiroo stayed in Hawaii to further his training. He wrote me a letter to say that my friendship helped him to stay the course. I didn't tell him that I prayed for him almost everyday. I'm sure the Holy Spirit prompted me and interceded for me during those times.

C. **He convicts** – in John 16:8, Jesus says to his disciples, “*When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.*” This passage about conviction applies to unbelievers. The next verse makes that clear, “*in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me*” (v. 9).

So, Jesus is talking about the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of unbelievers to convict them of their sin of rebellion against God. That if they continue in that state, a judgement is waiting for them. All of us who are now Christians, have experienced this convicting power of the Holy Spirit. For some, the conviction and conversion is dramatic and powerful because of the hardness of the heart. For some, it is quiet and almost unnoticeable because they have grown up in a Christian environment. In both instances, nevertheless, the Holy Spirit was at work to bring people to Christ.

One thing we must keep in mind is that the Holy Spirit is the one who convicts, not us. We cannot force people into the kingdom by scaring them or making them feel guilty or what-not.

D. **He leads** – In Luke 4:1, we read, *“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert.”* The reason why Jesus was successful in his ministry was that he always followed the leading of the Holy Spirit. That is his job. He leads us by a still, small voice, by dreams, by impressions, by circumstances, by God’s Word. He never leaves us alone to figure things out on our own. He is the voice that whispers behind our ear, *“This is the way; walk in it.”* (Isaiah 30:21)

Note that we can only truly follow when we are full of the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus was. You see, when we are full of us, instead of the Holy Spirit, then who will we follow? Our own selves. We’ll follow our own desires, own ambitions, own whims and caprices. That’s a sure-fire formula for disaster. People are lost and have no direction in life because they don’t know where they’re going. Booze, fun, drugs, money, cannot bring anyone anywhere. Destruction, for sure. These are all temporary things. But when you follow the Holy Spirit, there is joy and peace and freedom. As 2 Cor. 3:17 says, *“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”*

The apostle Paul encourages us in Eph. 5:18, *“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.”* How do you get filled with the Spirit? The answer is in this verse. You see, there is a direct parallel drawn between being drunk with wine and being filled with the Spirit. The issue is influence or control. A person under the influence of wine experiences altered behavior. He may say or do things he would not ordinarily do. And, in general, we know that quiet people suddenly become so talkative after drinking wine.

Likewise, the filling of the Holy Spirit produces a change in behavior. In the Book of Acts, once timid disciples became flaming evangelists for Jesus Christ. Not only that, the disciples became loving, peaceful, and good-natured citizens. Being filled with the Spirit, therefore, means continually choosing to live under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Being filled with the Holy Spirit doesn't mean I have more of the Spirit; it means the Spirit has more of me. When the Holy Spirit fills you, he will have the controlling interest in your life. It is "control by consent." And when that happens, it is easy to be led by the Spirit.

E. **He counsels** – one of the many titles of the Holy Spirit is Counselor. Jesus says to his disciples in John 14:16, *"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever."* Jesus, of course, is the Wonderful Counselor according to Isaiah 9:6. Because he is leaving, he is sending the Holy Spirit to take his place as counselor. The Greek word used here is Parakletos which means comforter, advocate, helper. So, the Holy Spirit is someone who is always there for us in our time of need. We can rely on him when the going gets tough. You need strength to face the day, ask the Holy Spirit's help. You need wisdom to decide which course of action to take, ask the Holy Spirit's help. You need the words to say in witnessing to someone, ask the Holy Spirit's help. You need peace and joy in the midst of chaos in your life, ask the Holy Spirit's help. The Holy Spirit will never leave you nor forsake you because He is God.

F. **He gives** – here, we're talking about the gifts of the Holy Spirit which he gives to each believer. 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 says, *"Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is*

given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.”

Paul is saying that the gifts that the Spirit gives are to be used for the good of the whole church. He is saying that we are a team, we cannot operate alone. No Christian is a lone ranger. Later on, we're gonna watch the Super Bowl. Even if I invite you to a dinner at Blue Pearl Buffet tonight at 6:30 until 10, you will not come with me. But some of you are smart and will say, "I'll go with you, I have a DVR." Yet, I doubt that because watching live is better.

Anyway, these two teams, the Ravens and 49ers will do all their best to win the championship. Both teams are ready. They have prepared. And for them to face the challenges ahead, each player knows exactly the role they're gonna play tonight. One false move and they lose. The reason these two teams are in the Super Bowl is that all the players are playing their assigned roles. And whenever there's a need, they step up.

Folks, it is teamwork that will make us win. We're not here to make a name for ourselves, or make money because we need it actually. We're not here to showcase our talents or gifts. We're here to win people to Christ, Amen? That's why I'm really elated when I hear some people stepping up and allowing God to use them.

They know their gifts and they want these gifts to be used for the kingdom. That's the way that we can grow. When all of us are pulling together to make a difference in people's lives.

Folks, the Holy Spirit is a person, he is God and he works on our behalf.

To conclude, let me tell you one last story.

Lonnie was a beautiful young woman, but she didn't know that about herself. She was raised in a Houston family, abused sexually by both her father and her brother. Lonnie was attractive to men, but ugly to herself. Lonnie married a man much more like than her father and brother than she ever dreamed. She loved him but was used by him. He, instead, fell in love with cocaine and himself. One day, he up and left her, taking all their money, cleaning out their bank accounts. She was left alone to raise two little children.

She tried to get a job. She did, but couldn't make much money by the time she had paid for child care. Someone told her that with a body and looks like hers, she could make a lot more money as a stripper. She interviewed for the job at a local club. She felt she had the word "shame" inscribed on her forehead. She needed the money and accepted the job. She put her kids to bed, drove her old car to the club, danced and, somewhat awkwardly, stripped. She wouldn't do this long. It was temporary because she needed the money. But she made big money. The few nights turned into weeks and the weeks into months. She hated herself, but not enough to stop — even when those men looked at her in the same way as her father, brother and former husband.

One day her boss told her about a photo shoot for a magazine. It paid twice as much as she was making for just a few hours of her time. So she drove to Galveston to the address that was given. They hadn't told her it was a hotel. She pulled up in front of it. The name of the hotel, believe it or not, was "Heartbreak Hotel." Shame overcame her once again. Her head dropped. She cried out, "O God, help me!"

Lonnie got out of the car, walked toward the hotel entrance. She looked up and saw the strangest sight. Behind the sign, "Heartbreak Hotel," was a huge billboard sign which read in large, bold letters, "Jesus Christ can mend a broken heart."

Lonnie never went into that hotel. She turned around. She drove home. She never went back to the club. The next day she walked into the Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church in Houston, Texas. She talked with one of the associate pastors. She told him her story. She expected to be shamed by the pastor. Instead, he said, "Welcome home, Lonnie!"

And Jesus Christ began to mend Lonnie's broken heart.

At last report, Lonnie was still single. She was making less money than she did before. She was making it and supporting her children at a respectable job, claiming God's help to live one day at a time.

What happened to Lonnie? I'll tell you what happened to Lonnie! The Holy Spirit heard her prayer. The Holy Spirit caught her at her darkest moment. The Holy Spirit helped her look up at just the right second to see the Heartbreak Hotel sign framed by those ultimate words of hope, "Jesus Christ can mend a broken heart!" And as Lonnie was willing to face her need, the Holy Spirit was able to meet it and continues to meet it, revealing truth,

enabling faith, giving spiritual power, and the guidance to be what she never dreamed she could be. The stripper has become a saint. The five-letter word across her forehead, "SHAME," has been removed, and the Holy Spirit has replaced it with the five-letter word "SAINT."

This is what the Holy Spirit has done or wants to do for you! Have you let Him? Will you let Him? These are the most important questions you will ever answer!

Let us pray.....