



THE SPIRIT-FILLED CHURCH

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The Big Idea: *The Holy Spirit is the same (uniquely Himself), even when He is expressed through us differently. The various ways He shows up are unique to us and the circumstances of our lives—time and place and purpose.*

God, the Holy Spirit. Who, or what, is the Holy Spirit?

Our English Bibles are translated from the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin texts. In those three parent languages, “spirit” carries the root meaning of *breath*, and also means *wind* or *spirit* (depending on where it’s used—its context), and easily presents itself as a metaphor for the movement of life.

Breath—a *movement of air* caused by a contraction of the lungs.

Wind—a *movement of air* caused by a shift in barometric pressure.

Spirit—a *life-giving movement* of the living God in us.

“Spirit” is the word that connects our sensory experience of breath and wind with the nature and activity of God.

The Wind of creation

¹*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.*

³*Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. (Genesis 1:1-3)*

The Breath of formation

⁹*One day Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and John baptized Him in the Jordan River. ¹⁰As Jesus came up out of the water, He saw the heavens splitting apart and the Holy Spirit descending on Him like a dove. ¹¹And a voice from heaven said, “You are My dearly loved Son, and You bring Me great joy.” (Mark 1:9-11)*

The Spirit of transformation

¹*On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. ²Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. ³Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. ⁴And*

everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability. (Acts 2:1-4)

Each of these texts marks a beginning, and in each text it is the Spirit who initiates the beginning:
The beginning of creation—holy creation;
The beginning of salvation—holy salvation;
The beginning of the church—holy community.

Metaphors Describe the Invisible

Water, wind, and spirit are metaphors (words that represent something else) that help us understand God better.

We all know what wind/breath is: just blow on your hand and feel it, or take a deep breath and feel your lungs expand, then exhale. Look at the leaves blowing in the breeze. Moving air at work.

When you see the limbs and leaves of trees moving, do you think it is the wind that moves the trees, or the trees that move the wind? Most will agree that it is the wind that moves the pliable branches and leaves. So, what is invisible is behind and gives energy to what is visible.

“By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.” (Hebrews 11:3)

“Momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

Relational Context

As a concept or an abstraction, “spirituality” frequently hides the very thing it is intended to reveal—God alive and active and present.

The term has become widely secularized in our present culture and as a result reduced to mean simply “vitality” or “centered energy” or “hidden springs of exuberance” or “an aliveness that comes from within,” without any relational context.

For most people it conveys no sense of the life of God—*Spirit* of God, *Spirit* of Christ, *Holy Spirit*.

Spirit was not “spiritual” for our ancestors (in the way it is commonly used today); it was sensual. It was the invisible that had visible effects. It was invisible, but it was not immaterial. Air has as much materiality as a granite mountain.

We must rescue the words “spirit” and “spiritual” and “spirituality” from their contemporary hollowness and misuse, and restore to them the relational context of life *with* God—the Holy Spirit—our Helper, Strengtheners, Defender, Healer, Deliverer, and Friend.

Today’s opening text said:

The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:12-13)

We come from different ethnic groups, different backgrounds, different families, different cultures, different experiences... yet, we have all come into the Family of Christ, the Kingdom of God, the same way: by God’s grace, through our faith, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Now, we are just one family—**ONE NEW PEOPLE!**

Less Than

Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. If the foot says, “I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand,” that does not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear says, “I am not part of the body because I am not an eye,” would that make it any less a part of the body? If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything? (1 Corinthians 12:14-17)

Some people, comparing themselves with others, imagine that they will never measure up, that they are misfits. “If only I were more like...” “I wish I had their abilities.” “I wish I had their insight and understanding.” “I wish I had their looks—their hair, their teeth, their nose, their figure, their height.”

But God has made us with differing abilities, because there are SO MANY abilities possible that no one can have them all. So, God made each of us special.

But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where He wants it. (1 Corinthians 12:18)

Do you yet realize that you are *just* where God wants you, whether you arrived by “accident” or “failure” or “good fortune.” Whether you feel adequate or inadequate.

More Than

How strange a body would be if it had only one part! Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. The eye can never say to the hand, “I don’t need you.” The head can’t say to the feet, “I don’t need you.” (1 Corinthians 12:19-21)

Some people, comparing themselves with others, imagine that they are better or more important than others. Oh, they may be better at *doing* something than others are, but that doesn't make them better persons, because we are NOT what we do.

We live in a society in which we are variously and vigorously depersonalized, functionalized, and psychologized into abstractions (labels). Life leaks out of us as we find ourselves treated as objects, roles, images, economic potential, commodities, and consumers.

The church reminds us, in very tangible ways, that we can NEVER say to one another, "I don't need you."

His Key Command

In fact, church is where we begin to learn to obey Jesus' primary command: "*Love one another, just as I have loved you.*" (John 15:12)

"This I command you, that you love one another." (John 15:17)

Wrote Apostle John: "*This is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.*" (1 John 3:11)

Said Apostle Peter: "*Fervently love one another from the heart.*" (1 Peter 1:22)

Added Apostle Paul: "*Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled [what God's law requires].*" (Romans 13:8)

This is the key that causes the church to thrive, and the world to believe, and the culture to change—impossible for humans on their own, but very possible with the powerful aid of the Holy Spirit.

This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad. All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it. (1 Corinthians 12:25-27)

May God help each of us to recognize and live out this wonderful reality! "*Christ among [us], the hope of glory!*" (Colossians 1:27)

May God help each of us to stay in our lane and quit imagining that the grass is greener somewhere else. Grass is greenest where it is well-watered. Water your own field.

May God help each of us to appreciate and celebrate what others bring to the table and contribute to the fullness of life—either ours or someone else's—and be gracious to their weaknesses and selfish motives—just like we hope they will do for us.

May God paint His purposes (which we do not fully perceive) in us and through us—both individually and collectively—through our relationships with His Spirit and His People.

THIS is the Church! This is Pentecost! This is the people of the Spirit!

And if we live like this, THIS WILL BE REVIVAL!