

Do you know the Holy Spirit?

Acts 1

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Sometimes it is very difficult to think seriously about spiritual things. There is so much activity in our experience that I find that we seldom slow down long enough to think about life. There is work to be done, games to watch or play, exercise to get in, children to get to the next event, hobbies to be finished, projects to be done at the office or at home, committees to organize, and recreation to get in, that there is precious little time left in life to think about: who we are, what we are doing, and why we are doing it.

And for many of us, spiritual activities are just more of the many things that we try to press into our day.

Have we gone to church?

Have I said my prayers?

Have I read the Bible today?

Have I prepared my Sunday school or Bible study lesson?

In our rush to get everything done, we fit our religious duties into the day in the same way that we fit in everything else.

There are too many of us who, unfortunately later rather than earlier, reach the end of our frazzled rope and desperately long to know where this merry-go-round of activity is getting us.

Religious activity, good church activities are just as tiring and seemingly pointless as non-religious activities.

Teaching Sunday School doesn't seem to have much more meaning to us than operating a computer all day.

Tutoring at the Street School doesn't really seem to be any more fulfilling over the long haul than belonging to a basketball league or health club.

That betrays that too often our spiritual life is little more than religious activity and what is missing is a relationship! - a relationship with God.

Do you know the Holy Spirit?

I'm not asking are you a Christian.

I'm not asking whether you believe in what Christ has done.

I'm not asking if you believe in God.

What I'm struck with is that for too many of us our spiritual life is nothing more than the sum of our religious activities.

Our spiritual life is "doing":

doing good things

reading the Bible faithfully

praying

serving in various ways

giving our money.

But what God desires is to relate to us, to befriend us, to love us, to be loved by us, to know us, to be known by us, to have a relationship with us.

It is a sad marriage and family that is nothing more than the sum of activities! Where a husband and wife work hard to provide financially, where they get the kids into the "Y" swimming lessons, league sports, and school band, where they exercise regularly, do their fair share in civic and school organizations, and where they schedule a vacation once a year and camping several times a year. They are a family whose lives are filled with activities but they don't know each other. There is a lot going on but there is no relationship. The activities are activity centered and not relationship centered.

For some of us, does that describe our religious experience?

We are doing a lot of "God-things" but we don't spend time with God to get to know Him?

We are busy checking off the religious activities but never drawing closer to the person of God?

Do you know the Holy Spirit?

The apostle John's indictment of the people of Israel when Jesus was here on earth was that "He came to His own but they didn't receive Him."

The Scripture declares that Jesus is God. Jesus maintained that He was God who had come to earth.

He claimed that to have Him was to have God in their midst.

The ultimate insult to God was for God to come to earth to demonstrate His love ultimately by dying for them and then for people to ignore Him and refuse to believe Him.

We look back now, from this vantage point in history, and say, "How could they have been so blind?"

Why didn't they respond to Jesus?

Why didn't they respond to Him as God with them?

What a privilege, we think, to have been alive then and to have known Jesus, to have talked with Him, to have seen Him after the resurrection or at the ascension. Imagine what it would have been like to have been with Him - to have been with God.

Have we done the same thing? Has the God the Holy Spirit come and are we largely ignoring Him?

Do you know the Holy Spirit?

I keep asking that question, "Do you know the Holy Spirit?" I ask it because in our on-going study of the book of ACTS the Holy Spirit is the central figure in all that is happening.

Look with me please at ACTS 1:4:

Jesus speaking to the disciples just before His ascension told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the gift the Father promised, which Jesus had told them about.

What gift? verse 5: the Holy Spirit

Again in verse 8, Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as the one who is coming and when He does they will receive power to be witnesses of Jesus throughout the world.

Now look at ACTS 2:1,4

"When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place...All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit..."

Just as Jesus had promised, the Holy Spirit came. And with His coming that first time there also came some miraculous signs - a sound like a violent wind, and the disciples began to speak in languages they had not learned.

Everyone around was so shocked by all of this that a crowd gathered and they began asking, "What does this mean?"

The Apostle Peter's response is in 2:14ff. In essence he says, "I'll tell you what's happening! Just what God, through the Prophet Joel, said would happen - the Holy Spirit has come.

And at the end of his speech, Peter again refers to the Holy Spirit - VERSES 38-39: "Repent, and be baptized, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children".

I have shown you these verses for a very particular reason:

Over the past few weeks as I have spoken from these same passages of Scripture, I have emphasized the **effects** of the Spirit's coming.

I have spoken about how He was poured out on the people and there was repentance and conversion.

I have spoken about how revival came at that time and can come again - a widespread awakening of God's people resulting in confession of sin, prayer, love for one another and others and so much more.

I have spoken about how the Spirit brought boldness to the disciples to meet the challenge that Jesus gave them to witness about Him.

And in the weeks ahead I will be speaking about more of the **results** of the Spirit's coming as we see what life

with the Spirit is like.

BUT what I have failed to do thus far, in my emphasis on the effects of the Spirit's coming, is to call your attention to the Person of the Spirit.

I talked about what happens when the Spirit comes
but I have not talked much about HIM!

The Spirit of God is not interested only in us enjoying the benefits of His presence but is interested in us knowing Him. He is jealous to have a relationship with us.

Again I liken it to a marriage: How sad when a wife finds out that all her husband is interested in is her income production, her body, and her housekeeping ability. What she really wants is to be known and loved!

Richard Lovelace has written, "The typical relationship between believers and the Holy Spirit in today's church is too often like that between the husband and wife in a bad marriage. They live under the same roof, and the husband makes constant use of his wife's services, but he fails to communicate with her, recognize her presence and celebrate his relationship with her." (Dynamics of Spiritual Life)

So again I ask, "Do you know the Holy Spirit?"

When the Apostle Paul was traveling from city to city in what is now the country of Turkey - he came to the city of Ephesus. In answer to Paul's question about the Holy Spirit, the people of Ephesus said, "We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

Most of you have hung around churches long enough to have at least heard about a Holy Spirit - but I have to wonder, "How familiar with Him are we?" Is there theological recognition but not personal relationship?

Because of the fuzzy teaching and fuzzy thinking about who the Holy Spirit is - it seems legitimate if there are many of you who would ask, "Isn't it enough that we know Jesus?" "My relationship is with Jesus, isn't that all I need?"

Let me answer those questions this way: "What did Jesus say?"

Remember back ACTS 1:4 where Jesus said that previously He had taught them about the Holy Spirit?

That teaching is recorded for us in the Gospel of John.

Please look at John 14:7. Jesus is speaking and He says to the disciples, "If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well."

In verse 8 "Philip said, Lord show us the Father"

Now listen to verses 9-11

"Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.

¹¹ Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.

One of the greatest truths about Jesus that was difficult for the disciples to grasp was that He was God.

They wanted to get past Jesus to God when Jesus continually tried to get them to realize that to know Him was to know GOD.

Jesus said that whoever has seen Him has seen the Father. He said, I and the Father are one.

Slowly over time, the disciples began to grasp that:

Peter when Jesus stilled the winds and waves;

John at the Mount of transfiguration;

And Thomas when he put his finger in the spear wound in Jesus' side after the resurrection.

With the advantage of history and teaching, most of us have come to understand that: We now know that to speak to JESUS, the Son is to speak to God as much as speaking to the Father is speaking to God - BECAUSE JESUS IS GOD.

He is not the FATHER, BUT HE IS GOD.

We know that Jesus is God who came to earth.
He is called "Emmanuel" meaning, "God with us".

In spite of how long it took for the disciples to grasp that Jesus was God, they finally came to that realization and then it was extremely difficult for them to see Him leave.

In this meeting between Jesus and His disciples in the upper room recorded for us in John 13-17, Jesus tells them that He is going to leave them.

This evokes a strong emotional response from the disciples:

They have come to love Him.

They have come to depend upon Him.

They know Him, there is a relationship of intimacy.

He was always with them.

He had control of all situations.

He talked to them and taught them.

They understood life and death and eternal truth like never before.

Finally life made sense, history made sense.

There's is no longer just an acquaintance,

They are no longer just enamored with His powers,

They are no longer just caught up with the possibilities,

They know Him and love Him.

What I want you to understand is that to these disciples their religion is not just the sum of their religious activities -They have come to KNOW someone, they have come to know GOD.

AND NOW HE WAS LEAVING!

In John 14:1 Jesus said, "Don't let your heart be troubled"

But their hearts were troubled!!

When Jesus gave His life as a sacrifice for sin and died on the Cross, they felt alone, abandoned, fearful.

But what was Jesus promise to them?

John 14:15 "And I will ask the Father and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth. The world cannot

accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him, for he lives with you and will be in you."

I think many of you through the years have come to understand that when Jesus said, "another Counselor", He meant another person **just like the one** you now have.

In other words: The Holy Spirit who is coming is GOD.

Just as JESUS is GOD, So the Holy Spirit is GOD

Or in other words: To have the Holy Spirit is to have the Son JUST AS to have the Son was to have the Father.

Look again please at ACTS 1:5:

Just before his Ascension into Heaven, Jesus reminds the disciples of this promise that he had made 43 days earlier.

And so in verse 14 when they all joined together constantly in prayer, what do you think they were praying about?

They were anticipating the coming of the Holy Spirit.

And then chapter 2, the day of Pentecost came.

AND THE SPIRIT CAME - GOD CAME.

And what those Disciples discovered was that to have the Holy Spirit with them was as real and dynamic and satisfying as to have Jesus in human form with them - because the Holy Spirit is God.

They were no longer fearful, sad, alone. God was with them.

After Pentecost do you ever hear the disciples saying or feeling that they wished that Jesus was with them again? Do you hear them complaining about the loss of a relationship with Jesus? NO!

The presence of the Holy Spirit within them was a real and as experientially positive and intimate as had been the presence of the son of God in human flesh while He was here.

Those disciples walked and lived in the conscious presence of the Lord.

They did not pray as if they had to get their prayers across millions of miles, and they did not ask favors of their God and wait as if space had to be covered or time passed before God could hear or respond to them.

They did not treat God as some outside influence on them but as present within them. They recognized that God was with them as certainly as when Jesus was physically present with them.

Please remember that the Holy Spirit is a person (not a human but a person) as much as Jesus was and is a person and as much as the Father is a person.

And that very person, personal, Spirit is with and in you if you are trusting in Christ - if you are truly a Christian.

Can you imagine the story you would tell if Jesus were to come and physically visit you -

if He were to walk into your home as He walked into Peter's,
if He were to talk to you as He did to Andrew,
if He were to sit with you and explain the Scriptures to you?

If I believe the Word of God, the Person of the Holy Spirit is as much with me right now as Jesus ever was when He was physically here on earth.

That's why I ask, "Do you know the Holy Spirit?"

Remember earlier when I said what a tragedy it was that God the Son, Jesus, came to earth and most people ignored Him - what a crime against deity, what insult, what SIN!

Is it any less a crime against deity to have the Holy Spirit here with us and in us and for us to ignore Him?

Is it any less an insult to Him, that we go through religious activities but ignore a relationship to Him?

God the Holy Spirit has come and He calls us to a relationship to Him that is just like the relationship God the Son had with the disciples had when He was here.

Will you get to know HIM?

Will you make a deliberate effort at the outset of each day and through each day to recognize the person of the Holy Spirit, to move within a

consciousness of His presence in your life? To open up your thoughts and words to share with Him?

Will you live each day in a relationship of communication and fellowship with Him through prayer and thought of Him?

Will you acknowledge Him as God with you?

Will you look to Him as your teacher, your guide, your helper, the giver of assurance, the one who empowers you for service?

Will you adjust all of your living to His presence?