

Questions for Small Groups | May 12, 2019

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Explore the Holy Spirit — Receiving the Holy Spirit

Focus Passage: *Galatians 3:1–9*

Context: *Galatians 2:15–3:9*

Other Passages Referenced: *Genesis 15:6; John 15:26; 2 Corinthians 3:18;*

Sermon Recap: To receive the Holy Spirit is to receive a relationship with the Triune God who is transforming us into the likeness of Christ. The receiving of the Holy Spirit was connected to the fulfillment of some of God's greatest Old Testament promises. We need to understand that the Holy Spirit is just as much of a person as Jesus was on earth. As the Holy Spirit dwells in us, we have fellowship with the Father and Son as well. When we do not depend on the Holy Spirit to guide and empower our lives, we depend on ourselves—self-absorption ... self-reliance ... self-gratification ... self-righteousness. Trying to live the Christian life without the Holy Spirit is lethal. If you have entrusted your life to Jesus as Savior and Lord, you have received His Spirit living inside you. That means you will never be more accepted by God than you are right now.

Introductory Comments to Leaders

One of the challenging-to-grasp truths of our faith is how we can be in Christ and Christ can be in us. The Bible teaches that Jesus is not now physically present on the earth; instead He is seated at the right hand of God the Father in heaven (Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33; 7:55–56; Rom 8:34). It is the Holy Spirit that is the “Great Connector” —not a biblical term but a biblical concept—that allows Jesus to be in us and us in Jesus. Because the Holy Spirit is One with Jesus and the Father, the Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to have a connected “personal relationship with Jesus and God the Father” although we are not physically in the presence of the first two members of the Trinity. One of the big ideas in Sunday's message was, “In receiving the Holy Spirit, we receive a relationship with the triune God.”

Throughout this series ***Explore the Holy Spirit***, we want to continually call attention to the fact that the indwelling Holy Spirit is God's mark of ownership on our lives (Eph 1:13; 4:30). If we do not have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us and conforming us more in the likeness of Jesus, we do not really belong to Jesus (Rom 8:9). The Holy Spirit is the means by which we initiate that relationship with Jesus and also the means by which we continue to grow and develop it. “Christ in us” (Col 1:27) and we being “In Christ” (Rom 8:1; 1 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:22) is much more than some theological precept. It is the practical reality of being a Christian and living a Christian life. It is obvious that Paul considered the Galatians to be genuine believers who had the Holy Spirit. Their problem was that they were reverting back to fleshly customs and practices rather than continuing under the direction of the Spirit. If we start off our relationship with Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit and then attempt to live that life in the power of our own flesh, we are in danger of becoming like the Judaizers who began with the Spirit but then sought to live by the flesh (Gal 3:3).

It may help for you to point out to your group members that God's promise of salvation for Abraham's descendants, as well as for the Gentiles, was given before the Law was handed down through Moses. The Law and individual works of righteousness were never intended to save anyone. Likewise those same kinds of works are not necessary to receive the Holy Spirit that comes with salvation.

Background Helps

- Galatia – a region in what is modern-day Southern Turkey. The churches there to whom Paul addressed his letter may have included churches in the cities of Iconium, Pisidian Antioch, Lystra, and Derbe that resulted from his team’s missionary activity described in the Book of Acts.
- The context of Paul’s letter to the Galatian churches has to do with a group of professing Jewish Christians known as “Judaizers.” Judaizers basically argued that it was necessary for Gentile converts to Christianity to be circumcised and observe other Jewish customs and laws.
- To see how Paul’s writing about the Holy Spirit relates to his concerns about the Judaizers, it would be best to read or listen to the entire letter of Galatians in one sitting. It can be read out loud in less than 21 minutes.

Hook: *Pick a Question to Help Ignite Conversation*

Are you more inclined to be a rule-keeper or a rule-questioner?

Have you ever tried to trick someone into thinking that you were someone else? ... Tell us about it.

Look—Observing and Interpreting:

READ: Galatians 3:1–9

1. How does Gal 3:2 relate to Gentile believers mentioned in Gal 3:7–9?
2. When did Abraham live in relation to the time the Old Testament Law was given to the Jewish people through Moses? How is that significant?

Illustrations:

Illustrations and quotes can be found on the “Sermon Slides” link at the bottom of www.wcchapel.org

Took: *Applying the message to our lives.*

1. What personal application(s) did you draw from Sunday’s message and our Galatians 3 passage?
2. Have you been more mindful of the Holy Spirit’s presence in response to the *Explore the Holy Spirit* series? If yes, can you see how that increased awareness has impacted your life in any way?
3. Are you currently trying to accomplish something that only the Holy Spirit can do?
4. How can we obey the Holy Spirit without falling into the “Trap of Legalism”?
5. How can we avoid falling into the “Trap of Spiritual Minimalism”—of viewing the Holy Spirit as an “add-on” to salvation rather than an essential component?

Prayer: Please spend some time praying for one another.

What we hope members glean from the passage:

1. Verse 2 explains that Christians do not receive the Holy Spirit as a result of their obedience to religious practices. They receive the Spirit through saving trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord. Verses 7–9 explain that Gentiles, likewise, are saved and receive the Holy Spirit through faith rather than obedience to religious practices.
2. Abraham lived around 400 years before God gave the Law through Moses to the Hebrew people. That is significant because both Abraham’s salvation and the promise that Gentiles would also be saved came before there was such a thing as the Law of Moses. The Law was never intended to save anyone.