

Grow Pt 3 – On The Holy Spirit

*John 14.12-31
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Spence Shelton*

Introduction

When I was a sophomore at UNC-Chapel Hill one of my suitemates had convinced me we needed to start attending a church. He had a Presbyterian background and I had a Baptist background & both wanted something new.

So, since we are in college and that is when you “experiment” we decided we’d check out a...charismatic church. So like many of you have done we googled “charismatic churches near me” and That Sunday we found ourselves at a true Pentecostal church and listen, we fell in love with it. Dozens of nationalities, no majority culture, people clapping, waving hands, and shouting...that’s just during the sermon. The music...whoa! People needed water breaks they were dancing so hard. There was a tambourine guy down front. BTW one way you know you are in a Pentecostal church...you have a tambourine guy. But we loved it. And after a few weeks invited all our friends to come with us one Sunday. For what we didn’t know would be “Holy Spirit Sunday.” And a guest preacher who was

called PROPHET so&so was there to preach. Ya’ll that went from out of my comfort zone to...making sure I could see all exit signs. So he started prophesying, people started falling out, he points right in my direction and says GOD IS TELLING YOU TO MOVE TO INDIA TODAY. Thankfully a couple right in front of me stood up and ran down front like it was the price is right to accept their calling. People were speaking in tongues, running around the room, and it was overwhelming and chaotic. Now of course one of the people in that group we brought was my girlfriend Courtney. And she was just wide eyed looking at me like “what has happened to you?”

And I realized something right then. I had no idea what or who the “Holy Spirit” was they had named this Sunday after. And though that group was too extreme for me, it was the first church I’d gone to where people seemed excited to be there and I wanted that. I was tired of boring, ho-hum go through the motions faith. I wanted a faith that actually gave me life and made a difference to me!

If you are new with us we are walking through a portion of the gospel of John where Jesus sits down with his disciples for a last meal before he goes to get crucified. And we are just leaning in and listening to that conversation. And today he is going to tell them, and us, that life and vitality for you individually and for us as a church comes from someone he calls the Holy Spirit. And I told you that story because you guys come from all over the place when it relates to the

holy spirit and I want you to know I know how loaded even the term sounds for some of you.

Just on our small staff we have people who grew up Pentecostal, Baptist, super Baptist, or with no church background. There are many more backgrounds in here and I know it by your reaction to our music. Some of you with more traditional backgrounds are like...Mercy can be a little too free & expressive. I was like that. One time growing up a lady raised her hand during the pastor's sermon as a symbolic gesture of "testifying" to what she was hearing and the pastor stopped & said yes mam you have a question? Others of you feel like we are nowhere near free enough and wish we'd let loose a little. Good news is, the Holy Spirit has to do with SO MUCH MORE than a style of music ok?

So I want you to go with me through Jesus' words here and together lets develop a good understanding of something that seemed so important to Jesus. So important in fact that he thought it was better for us to have the Holy Spirit than to have him with us. Pretty crazy right. We'll get to that in a second.

3 Questions we are going to answer today.

1. Who is the Holy Spirit?

2. What does the Holy Spirit do? – That's the why does this matter to me question

3. How do you follow the Holy Spirit? – That's the "if this does matter, what do I do about it?"

One last thing: There is a danger that you think I'm about to give an informational lecture on a topic. That's just not the case at all ok. I'm going to walk through a passage of scripture and show you something you desperately need and very few in our church understand. So right now you might need to guard against a mindset that thinks this might be interesting and switch to a mindset that thinks, "This is what I've been missing!"

Here we go: **John 14.12-31**. I'm going to start at verse 15. Read through it and as I do we are going to build a profile for question 1: who is the Holy Spirit. Then we'll circle back and figure out why this is so important for us in everyday life.

Who is the Holy Spirit?

[15] "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

This goes back to something we've talked about a lot here at Mercy. That you don't keep God's commandments out of fear of judgment, or so that you can earn God's blessings. Like a "Keep 7 get heaven" moral code. Jesus says the one who *loves* him will keep his commandments. Our affection for him compels us to follow him. That is gospel-motivated obedience. That is so important he repeats it multiple times in this dinner with his guys. Then he says...

[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.

Ok, now he's introduced for the first time a new person. Up to this point in John it's been The Father and the Son. Now He says he will give us *another* "helper." That word helper is a legal term meaning advocate. **The Holy Spirit is: our advocate.** Up to this point HE, Jesus, was their advocate before the father. And Jesus is not resigning that post but something is changing. He is calling in another person who, like an advocate would, stands before God & speaks to God on our behalf. Later in NT Paul will talk about the Spirit who *intercedes* on our behalf when we pray. And he's more than the mailman who delivers our prayers. He *helps* us as he walks with us. When you are weak, the Spirit helps you in your weakness.¹

Verse 17 calls this Helper the "Spirit of truth." Which is more intel for us on who he is. **The Holy Spirit is: Truth.** Because he is the Spirit of God, he *is* truth. He must be truth. His very nature is truth.

And one of the ways he *helps* us is that he illuminates truth to us. Where do we find truth? We find it in God's word. And what the Spirit does is it takes that truth and brings it alive in us. When you become a Christian the bible changes from words on a page to a sort of life-source for you. That is

the Holy Spirit bringing God's words to bear on your conscience.

This is why a barrier often exists between Christians and their non-Christian friends like he talks about in verse 17. The non-Christian cannot understand why the Christian is so passionate about following "God." It's because God is actually dwelling in this Christian and showing him or her a true reality that the non-Christian cannot understand because he or she doesn't have the Holy Spirit. The Spirit doesn't just stop you from doing what you want to do. The Spirit changes your "wanter" to want what God wants. You start to lose your desire for things that aren't in line with God's truth. And you start to desire that which truly satisfies. That's what confuses the non-Christian.

I got a friend who is pregnant and she said "yeah I can't eat chicken anymore." What!? How sad. Why? Well, something happened to me that changed my tastes. Same way with Holy Spirit. It changes your tastes. Guy told me the other day he was on drugs from the time he was 9 until he was 22. Then he met Jesus in a church service he randomly wandered into. And since that DAY he's been 100% clean. And his friends were like...what happened to you? Changed tastes. That's the Holy Spirit. And some of you are like, man I need my tastes changed. That's what the Spirit does...tunes your heart to align with God's heart. And we are going to talk in a little bit about how you get that but are you starting to see why The Spirit is so important!

¹ Romans 8.26-27

Let's keep going

[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.

This is Jesus saying that tomorrow he's going away. First to the cross, then after the resurrection he's going to the father. And look at this..."because I live." Church one thing we have hope in is that he STILL lives. He's alive today. And because he's alive today, you also can have life. Not only can you live now, but you will live! He's talking about the hope of heaven. Death has no sting because Jesus faced death and then lived! I've wept with too many friends who've lost loved ones and the one hope we who are still here can rest in is that HE LIVES! Because he lives I can live. Old Hymn from that Baptist church that had great words and a bore you to death melody. "Because He Lives" I can face tomorrow. Because he lives...all fear is gone. My only hope in life now and in heaven is that Jesus lives!

So now we, if you place the weight of your life onto him...you can live! OH I could sit here all day.

[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?"

Basically Jesus, you say you are going to leave and yet still be here with us. How?

[23] Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and (watch this) **we** will come to him and make our home with him.

This is the most important thing I want you to see about the Holy Spirit. Jesus says that for each who love him, he and the father are going to come to you and make their home in you. And just a few verses ago in 17 he said the Spirit, the Helper, will be *in* you. That's 3 people taking up residence in you. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Starting to get pretty crowded in there! Here's what Jesus is affirming: **The Holy Spirit is: The Presence of God with us.** Jesus is acknowledging a truth that is rich and beautiful and profound. God is God the Son, God is God the Father, and God is God the Holy Spirit! So when he says "we" will make our home in you he's saying you will have the full (not 1/3) but the full presence of God with you. See if you've been in church before there is a danger that can seem normal to you. It is anything but normal. I remember a conversation with a Jewish friend from a few years back. He was like...Are you telling me Christians believe God resides within them? I said yes! He said..."bro I think you are a smart guy but that is just stupid." Your body can contain God? I feel like I'd notice if God were in there. Then he said kind of sarcastically, but I guess you feel pretty good knowing whatever you get into later tonight God is right there.

In his sarcasm he probably had a more accurate understanding of the Holy Spirit than most Christians. Most do not operate like God is walking with them. Like he has made his home in them and dwells there. We just kind of think of “God with us” as a nice platitude

Do you realize the peace, the calm, the resilience against temptation, the endurance in suffering, the diffusing of anger, the healing of pain that all comes when you begin to let the Presence of God go to work in your life!? That is GOD at work IN you.

And that is going to do a couple of things to Christians we will see in just a second. Let’s look at 3 more verses:

[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.

See the disciples were going to forget some things. They were going to try to follow Jesus but on their own they were just going to fail. So Jesus says I’m not going to leave you to yourself. The Holy Spirit will be there. And his job is to actively teach you & remind you of my word. **The Holy Spirit is: Our guide.** Your translation might read that he is

our “counselor.” Think of him as a guide like a safari guide ok. The guide doesn’t create the path, the guide shows you where the path is and makes sure you are on it & that you stay on it.

The role of the Holy Spirit is to guide you in your obedience to God’s commands. It doesn’t create new commands, it reminds you, instructs you, and empowers you to obey the commands God has already given you in scripture! That’s who the Holy Spirit is. The Holy Spirit is our helper, He is truth, He is God with us, and our active guide through life.

Let me show you what Jesus says his presence does in and through us.

What does the Holy Spirit Do?

Start by continuing through to verses 27-28.

[27] Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.

That aligns with something he’s been setting up. We saw it a little with the truth idea. He is leaving something that is distinctly different from the world around them. The world is powerless to give real peace. Again, look at our last few days and weeks. Throughout history peace has been won by bloodshed and who had the biggest guns. But Jesus brings peace by shedding his own blood. And that peace is he is leaving is peace with God. Your sin has set you against

God the father. Plain and simple. You need to make peace with God. There is only one way. Jesus has to pay the penalty for your rebellion. That's why he's telling them he's leaving. To carry this out. And he leaves the Holy Spirit *with* you to permanently seal your peace with God. That's the first thing the Holy Spirit does.

Through the blood of Christ **What does the Holy Spirit Do: He gives you peace with God.** And that peace is *complete* and it is permanent.

[13] In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, [14] who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.²

I know some of you in here need this peace! You need this peace in your soul! You are constantly anxious, constantly bitter, constantly waging some kind of internal battle and God looks at you and says my child...be at peace! I sent my son so you would have peace now, here on earth. That come what may your heart and mind are joyfully resting in Christ. You are mine! Your peace with God is sealed and guarded by the Holy Spirit. And then Jesus shows you more of what this Peace the Spirit brings does for you...

Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

² (Ephesians 1:13-14 ESV)

[28] You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I will come to you.' If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

If you really understood what I was doing...you would rejoice! I'm leaving you...rejoice! WHAT? Jesus actually ups the ante in John 16 on this language. Listen to what he says about the Spirit:

[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. John 16.7

This right here makes me want to take a poll. How many of us right now, if we were given the choice between the spirit of God in us and Jesus Christ walking beside us...would chose Jesus? My guess is most. I mean think how awesome it would be to have Jesus right here.

I've got a buddy who helped me think about this passage and used to joke...Fridge getting low? BOOM. Multiply. Feeling a little sick? Boom, all better. Your dog dies...Boom Jesus brings it back to life. Your cat dies...Jesus helps you dig a grave to bury your cat. Cause Jesus hates cats.

Here's my point, our natural instinct is to prefer Jesus standing here with us. Yet JESUS says it is better for us to have the Holy Spirit in us. Does your experience with the Holy Spirit validate that? That the Spirit is better for you than Jesus beside you? And if it doesn't, it might mean you

are missing something. Jesus believed the Holy Spirit would be a better teacher than even he was. Which might sound hard to believe but the Spirit, Jesus explains later in John 16, can take the word of God and speak it into the deep recesses of our hearts at just the right time. That's how the Spirit gives you peace with God and grows your heart into abiding in that peace.

Let me go back and get verse 12 for us to show you the other thing the Spirit does.

[12] "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.

Do you see that phrase "greater works?" Doesn't that seem absurd? He's saying we, his followers, will do greater works than he. How is this even possible? How can we do greater works than Jesus? Have you raised anyone from the dead? Ever walked on water? Ever multiplied a happy meal into a thanksgiving feast? Of course not. It seems so absurd, even heretical, for Jesus to say we can do greater works than he did because of course he is God and we are not. So what is he saying?

Leon Morris: He's not saying these works will be greater in power, but greater in scope. See during his lifetime Jesus was confined to a relatively small area of Palestine. After his departure his followers were able to work in widely scattered places and influence much larger numbers of

men. All as Christ's agents. When on earth, Jesus' ministry was constricted to wherever he was at. Not now. Now that he is *in* us, his power is wherever we are. So they are greater in scope & number than his were.

Not only that, Morris says, he likely also meant our works were greater because they were pointing people to his salvation he accomplished in his resurrection.

Leading someone to forgiveness of sins is a greater work than making a lame man walk because the latter is temporary and the former is eternal. In fact, Jesus raised the lame man to prove he had the power to forgive sins. Forgiving sins was the point; healing the man was just a sign. All of Jesus' miracles of healing were only signs of his greater and more significant work: reconciling us to God. So when we persuade people to believe in Jesus, we are accomplishing the greater work.³ IS THAT YOUR LIFE? Are you participating in these greater works?

In a recent survey of evangelical Christians,

- 80% believed it was their responsibility to share their religious beliefs about Jesus with a non-Christian.
- 60% had not shared with anyone in the past 6 months

³ Greear, J.D. *Jesus Continued: Why the Spirit Inside You is Better Than Jesus Beside You*. (Zondervan, Grand Rapids 2014) 64.

- 50% hadn't even invited anyone to church in that time. ⁴

Basically, most Christians believe sharing the gospel is important, but never do. WHY? They are afraid! Because they think the power for & the results of this "work" is up to them.

This is the Holy Spirit's job!

What does the Holy Spirit do: He empowers you for God's mission.

He gives you power to share the gospel and he's the one who is going to bring someone to faith in Christ! Instead of conjuring up the courage to share the gospel, how about you yield to the Holy Spirit who wants to work through you and has the power to accomplish these greater works anyway?

Great example: Courtney my wife got saved through a lame gospel presentation in a defunct unhealthy church. Lead pastor was in the midst of a moral failure and the guy leading the youth group had no idea what he was doing. But he put a sheet of paper on a door and said, "this door is the door to heaven. If you know you can walk through this door, come sign the door." Courtney couldn't because she

didn't know. The Holy Spirit saved her...a MIRACLE...A GREATER WORK...through that lame gospel presentation.

You have that same Holy Spirit. Who can use a boring, simple-minded person like you (just kidding) to bring salvation to somebody! Think of Peter...Jesus ascends, the Holy Spirit comes down...and in Peter's 1st sermon 3k people get saved!! I'm waiting on that day! Peter was a fisherman...he hadn't been to seminary! In fact that scaredy cat had just denied Jesus a few days earlier. What changed? HE HAD THE HOLY SPIRIT!! And so do you! Why? To rest in your peace with God and to bring that peace to others. And God will empower you for that! All you have to do is follow the Spirit. Your purpose here in Charlotte is to carry the peace and hope and joy Jesus gave you to others who so desperately need it. And God has empowered you to do it. If you'll just listen to His Spirit.

Ok, if the Holy Spirit is so important to listen to and follow...yet so unfamiliar to most of us, **how do we follow the Holy Spirit?** I want to close out with some really practical guidelines for following the Spirit.

Seek the Spirit in the Word of God.

The Spirit of God guides us primarily through His Word. The vibrant Christian life is a union of clarity in the Word and openness to the Spirit. If we seek the Spirit of God apart from the Word of God, our faith will end in shipwreck. More havoc has been wreaked in the church following the words "The Spirit of God just said to me..." than any other phrase.

⁴ Wilke, John D. "Church Goers Believe in Sharing Faith, Most Never Do."
<http://www.lifeway.com/Article/research-survey-sharing-christ-2012>

People will tell me “God is telling me to get divorced. Because God wants me to be happy.” Nope. That’s your sin and you want to feel better by calling it God. “I prayed about it and feel at peace about moving in together.” That’s nice, but God didn’t give you that peace because it’s contradictory to his word.

God’s spirit *never* operates independently of his Word. Why would he? Think about it: Why would he call the Scriptures a “more sure word” “Fully sufficient for every good work” and then proceed to ignore, abandon, or contradict it? So always seek the word.

In the same way, if you seek to obey the word apart from the power of the Spirit, not only will your spiritual life be lifeless and dull, you’ll also miss out on the help God wants to give you and the most exciting things he has planned for you. You’ll miss out on a truly dynamic relationship with the Spirit. I am learning so much in this area. I’ve developed a very active prayer life that looks like this “God, what do you want me to do in this little situation?” And I’ll get an inkling of what seems right...and then I’ll get scared to do it. Like “go ask that guy how you can pray for him.” Well...it’s in sync with God’s word to pray for people...but I don’t want to be a weirdo. Bottom line, I have more awkward interactions than I used to. But I also have had incredible moments where I see God was working waaaaaay before I showed up in this person’s life. What if you just asked yourself more regularly...how could God use me in this situation?

So seek the Spirit in the Word. The spirit of God draws upon our knowledge of the Word of God to counsel and encourage us like a gunner draws upon a stash of ammunition. No ammo in the chamber, gunner simply has nothing to work with. Doesn’t matter how powerful the gun. Without ammo it’s empty.

If you want to be led by the Spirit of God, devote yourself to the Word of God. Load up some Ammo!

Seek the Spirit in the Church

No time to really dive in deep here but the Spirit of God works in the life of the believer to encourage, affirm, remind, and warn you as you seek clarity in what the Spirit might be leading you to do. God uses his church to speak wisdom into your life. Important decisions made in isolation usually end in disaster. I have people sit in my office and tell me about a colossally dumb decision and I say “did you talk to others before you did that?” they’ll say “no but I prayed about it.” To which I might say “great!” but then you cut yourself off from how God wanted to answer that prayer...the counsel of the church.

This is why, and we say it a lot, we want you to be in community! Where the Holy Spirit can speak to you through the counsel of others. Don’t make a decision and inform others of it, involve others in the decision making process. So please get in a community group! We are starting a few new ones in August.

BTW can I tell you this all sets us up for something...I hope we come to church prepared to be used by the Spirit of God. Again not trying to make us into a crazy place I think you know that. But, the New Testament envisions a gathering of believers, a church service, which consists of 3 things: the word of God, the people of God, and the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God puts the Word of God in the mouths of the people of God. And when that happens Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14 believers are built up and even unbelievers recognize that God is alive and at work in the church. That's why we bring people up here like Anna who came up today. It's why we have a prayer team at the end of every service. It's why we saturate our music in the word of God and why our sermons are explaining the Word of God. So That the Spirit of God might MOVE in your life!!

Closing

The great thing about the Holy Spirit as John describes his work in this passage is it shows us a couple of needs and how the Holy Spirit fulfills them. You need peace with God and you need purpose in your life. The Holy Spirit secures your peace with God. Some of you need to believe that finally. And all of us need to see the purpose he gives us. The mission he calls us to.

Let's pray.