

1. Who is the Holy Spirit?

Opening question

How would you describe the Holy Spirit to someone?

Fact check: the Holy Spirit is God

Read the following verses together. What do they have in common?

- Matthew 3:13-17
- Matthew 28:18-20
- Acts 2:33
- 2 Corinthians 13:14
- Ephesians 2:18

They are all “Trinitarian”, treating God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as equals.

We can also see the Holy Spirit’s divine nature in what we are told about Him:

- He was present at and involved in Creation, Genesis 1:2
- He is eternal, Hebrews 9:14
- He is everywhere, Psalm 139:7-10
- He is all-knowing, 1 Corinthians 2:10-11
- He is all-powerful, Luke 1:35-37
- He inspired the writing of Scripture, 2 Peter 1:21, 2 Timothy 3:16
- He is holy, Psalm 51:11, Romans 1:4

Discussion

Most Christians would agree that the Spirit is God because we’re used to saying “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” – but how should this truth impact how we think about Him? Do we find it harder to describe Him than we do the Father or the Son? Why do you think this is?

Fact check and discussion: descriptions of the Holy Spirit

Arrange people in four groups and give them each group one of the references below. Ask them to report to the rest of the group what image is used there to describe the Spirit, and what they think God intends to tell us about the Spirit through this image.

- John 3:8, Acts 2:2 (wind)
- Acts 2:3 (fire)
- John 7:37-39 (water)
- Acts 2:13-15, Ephesians 5:18-21 (wine: these verses are implications about the impact of the Spirit on people)

The image of wind/breath/spirit is by far the most commonly used (you could send people BibleProject’s video [“The Holy Spirit”](#) which focuses on this), and we will look at this more in the next session, when we consider the Spirit in the Old Testament.

“The Hebrew term rendered ‘spirit’ is *rûah* which can also be rendered ‘breath’ or ‘wind,’ all terms that seek to speak theologically about the release into the world of a specific force that

is linked to YHWH but which is invisible, inexplicable, and irresistible.” (Walter Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith*)

The language used in the references above may tempt us to think of the Spirit as not being a person but, as we’ve already seen, He is God! We’re also told that He...

- Speaks, Acts 8:29
- Interprets our prayers, Romans 8:26-27
- Can be lied to, Acts 5:3-4
- Can be grieved, Ephesians 4:30
- Chooses whom to give His gifts to, 1 Corinthians 12:11

Perhaps the most helpful way to think of Him is the word Jesus used four times when speaking to the disciples on the night before He died:

- “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper [Greek: *parakletos*], to be with you for ever,” (John 14:16)
- “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.” (14:26)
- “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.” (15:26)
- “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.” (16:7)

“Since ‘spirit’ is a neuter noun in Greek and ought to take the pronoun ‘it’, Jesus further emphasises that the Holy Spirit is a person by almost always using the pronoun ‘him’ instead. He also calls him the *parakletos*, which means one who comes alongside to help, and which was a word used by the Greeks to describe a helpful slave, an advocate, a defence attorney or an adviser. Greek soldiers also used it when they buddied up before pitched battles as the name for the person with whom they would stand back to back during the melee which ensued. Jesus therefore teaches in this chapter that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead and that he stands with us to intertwine his life with ours. He describes this amazing privilege by celebrating what it means in verse 20: ‘I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.’” (Source unknown)

Discussion

Do you find it hard to relate to the Holy Spirit as a person? How might what we’ve looked at change how you think about Him? What does all this tell us about God’s willingness to help us?

Pray together

Speak to Him directly, thanking Him for who He is and what He does. Use the images and implications from your discussions to praise Him, and to ask for His help. Ask for a greater understanding of who He is, and for more encounters with Him.

To reflect on during the week

Think again about how to describe the Spirit to others.

Throughout the week, ask Him to come to you and help you.