

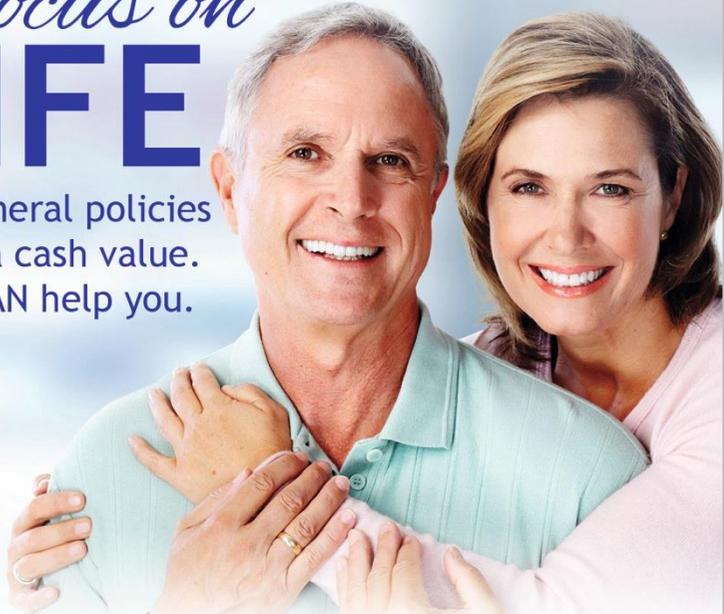
Daily Devotional

Booklet



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Fired Up

RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT

Page 01

01 June 2020

These devotions are written by a team of writers and ministers from Northfield Methodist Church. An electronic version of this booklet that is formatted for easy reading on your tablet or phone, can be downloaded from our website, or you can request to be added to the email list.

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RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT: DAY ONE

Read John 14 especially verses 2-9, 15, 25.

In our reflections on receiving the Holy Spirit, our focus for the first 3 days will involve gaining clarity on who the Holy Spirit is. Our focus today is the Holy Spirit as a divine person. As such, the translation of the Greek “Parakletos” (Holy Spirit) into the English “Holy Ghost”, as well as the use of the pronoun “it”, is unfortunate and leads to distorted approaches to God. Our receiving of God is always personal.

Of all the things said by Christians about God, the most distinctive is that God is three persons. Augustine of Hippo spoke of the personages of the Trinity being co-equal. The Cappadocian Fathers used the image of the Spirit dancing in and amongst the Father and the Son. Similarly, in saying that God reveals himself through himself, Karl Barth spoke of the Spirit both revealing and being revealed through the Father and the Son. The strong message that comes to us through these statements is that one cannot speak of Father, Son or Spirit in isolation – receiving the Spirit is inseparable from receiving the Father and the Son and our reception of God as Father, Son and Spirit is always personal.

This personal receiving of God as well as the inseparability of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is well spoken to by Jesus in John 14. Here Jesus speaks of any experience of him being a receiving of the Father for He is in the Father and the Father is in Him (v7, 9-10). He also speaks of returning to them to take or lead them to where He is (v3) and then later of them receiving from the Father another Advocate or Teacher or Counsellor who will be forever present (v15, 26).

While our experience of receiving the Holy Spirit is varied, it is always and only about experiencing God personally. It is about living with the assurance that in God we live and breathe and have our being. It is about life lived in the personal presence of God through the Holy Spirit. But because of the personages of the Trinity, receiving the Holy Spirit includes becoming more receptive to Christ as Saviour, Lord and Friend; it includes knowing and relating to God more as loving and merciful Father than as punishing and righteous Judge. If you can relate any of your experience of God with the experiences mentioned in this paragraph, then you have some sense of receiving the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Come Holy Spirit, come. Amen.

RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT: DAY TWO

Read Matthew 7:15-20.

If the Holy Spirit is a person, then the Holy Spirit has a personality. This makes the Holy Spirit recognisable, and one gains a sense of the Holy Spirit in the same way that one gains the sense that you are in the presence of any other person. Sometimes we even say that a certain person we met wasn't himself or herself – our experience of the person didn't match the information we have of that person. The word person derives from the Latin word persona. Persona refers to a mask or the way an actor presents "in character" in a performance. In speaking of the Holy Spirit, the mask or persona is not worn by God to hide but to reveal his true character. The Holy Spirit is thus one of three personal disclosures of God that correspond to what God is really like. Thus through the love of the Father, the grace of the redeeming Son, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the complete revelation of God is made. The Holy Spirit is therefore a particular aspect or mask of the One Being - God is One in essential being, but in His being there are three persons, modes or forms, in which the divine essence exists.

Matthew 7:15-20 speaks about a correlation between a tree and the fruit it bears. It also speaks about being able to recognise the essence of a tree by the fruit it bears. So too is it with persons – the essence of a person is revealed in the fruit of that person's life; by the offer that person makes to the world. The same is true for the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is recognised by the offer the Holy Spirit makes to the world; by the engagement of the Holy Spirit with the world. The person of the Holy Spirit has distinct/personal attributes that reflect the work of the Holy Spirit. And so, amongst other descriptions, the Holy Spirit:

- is our Comforter John 14:16
- is Grieved Ephesians 4:30
- is Mediator John 16:8
- teaches and leads believers John 16:13
- convicts us of sin John 16:14
- reminds us of Christ's teaching John 14:26
- speaks and commands Acts 8:29
- prays for us and supports us Romans 8:26
- is Omniscient 1 Corinthians 2:10-11
- is Eternal Hebrews 9:14

Does your experience of the Holy Spirit match some of these descriptions? Which of these descriptions are you most drawn to?

Prayer: Ask God to lead you into a receiving of His Spirit in a new way.

RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT: DAY THREE

Read Romans 8:1-27.

The Holy Spirit is not just a person with a personality, but also the One who is eternally present and active in the created order of God. Take some time reading the set passage of Scripture in the light of the above statement. Read the passage slowly – sometimes phrase by phrase, noting how the Holy Spirit is in fact eternally present and active in the created order.

As this is done, one gains the sense that the work of the Holy Spirit, like the identity of the Holy Spirit, is far vaster than what we are inclined to comprehend, believe or consciously act upon. As God, the Holy Spirit has been present and active far beyond the chronologies of which we are able to comprehend. As God, the Holy Spirit is in this moment present and active in ways far beyond our own comprehensions of reality. As God, the Holy Spirit will continue to be present and active in the created order of God in ways that you and I are not able to fully comprehend. Such is the vastness of the Holy Spirit's being and work.

As a result, caution must be taken by each one of us in identifying the person and work of the Holy Spirit only to supernatural and spectacular events. Such an identification is a relegation... a confinement... a limitation and a neglect of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Criticism of neglect of the Holy Spirit is only valid if we restrict or limit the Holy Spirit from being all who the Holy Spirit is and doing all that the Holy Spirit does.

Our continual challenge is to grow our understanding, vision, belief, behaviour and being into Christ-likeness. We fail at this daily - we fail to grasp the extent of the one God, the blessed Trinity's being and activity. In our failure however, let us not lose sight of,

or rob ourselves of our experience of God three in one. We, as followers of Christ, have a story to share with the world.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, continue to expand and enrich my experience of you. Amen.

RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT: DAY FOUR

Read Acts 2:14-39 especially verses 29-39.

When we receive the Holy Spirit, the darkness of evil within us and around us is addressed, and our need for Jesus Christ becomes clear.

While the Holy Spirit is in, with and beneath each everyday experience in the world - working unknowingly or unconsciously, there are times when we experience an absence of an awareness of the presence and power of God. Such moments are often dark moments of being tossed about by forces and realities greater than ourselves and causing damage in our lives. Life lived without such awareness at best allows us to know what we should be doing, but never gives us the power to live as we should. We are also met with questions concerning the meaning and purpose of life and a frustration at not being able to live as we should. This causes us either to live a life of frustration and disillusionment at ourselves and at others, or we move into denial of reality and downsize our ideals to suit the limited capacity of our lives.

Such a state of life is simply the Spirit of God working within, making one uncomfortable and prompting one to change or to be transformed to live a life where there is an awareness of the presence and the power of God. The Holy Spirit brings about a dissatisfaction of the way things are now, to spur us on to reach out to a new way of living. Moltmann speaks of the Holy Spirit working instability into unjust conditions, pricking the conscience of people who perpetrate injustice with guilt, and then offering the atoning power of Christ's substitution among and in those very perpetrators of injustice.

In Acts 2, we read an account of the Jews who killed Jesus being convicted of their sin. At the time, they did not see themselves as sinning, they believe that they were acting in the interests of God and thus serving Him. But did you pick up their response to their conscience being pricked? In v 37, it says they were cut to the heart. There was a conviction that what they thought was done in the service of God was a crime against God and against humanity and that their sin caused it. After this conviction Peter offers a life-giving opportunity: ***“Repent and be baptized, every one 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 and for all who are far off - for all whom the Lord our God will call.”***

Have you ever been convicted of sin? Have you received the offer of the atoning power of God found in Christ?

Prayer: Holy Spirit, do what you need to do to lead me into the atoning power of Christ. Amen.

RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT: DAY FIVE

Read Acts 2:1-4.

Luke speaks of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as fire (v3). Part of the nature of fire is to consume or to burn away. As the Holy Spirit takes root and makes a home in your life and in mine, as the Holy Spirit is received, all that is unnecessary, superficial and trivial must be stripped away.

Remember Isaiah's experience in the temple as recorded in Isaiah 6? When Isaiah saw the vision of God, he saw himself and his community as they really were, as a people of unclean lips. God sought to consume the impurities of Isaiah with a burning coal from the fire. Then Isaiah became ready for God's work.

The tongues of fire represent the burning away of sin by the Holy Spirit as part of a process that purifies and readies God's person and people for the work God calls them to do. We cannot receive and be filled by the Holy Spirit until we are first emptied of the rubbish that clogs our lives. We cannot hope to receive and be filled by the Holy Spirit without first being emptied of all the dross and nonsense that we are so full of. We may not know this, but the Holy Spirit knows this and has known it and started his work of convicting us of sin long before we even became aware of it. Where there is hatred the Holy Spirit is working to convict us of our sin. Where there is anger clouding our perception of others and of life, the Holy Spirit is at work; where there is resentment, the Holy Fire comes to consume; where people are living in pity as victims, the Holy Spirit comes to convict us of our sin. We cannot receive and be filled with anything of God when we are already so full of so much.

Prayer: Come Holy Fire of God. Amen.

RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT: DAY SIX

Read John 20:19-23.

We only receive and are filled with the Holy Spirit to be used by the Holy Spirit.

The image of filling something or someone is used to instruct: that which is filled is then used and poured out. When I fill a jug with water it is for the purpose of it being poured out, for the benefit of something or someone other than myself. When I fill my car with petrol it is so that the petrol will be used to power the engine of my car. How can you talk about filling something up if you don't also imply the idea of being emptied? The point of being filled is to be emptied.

This idea of being filled to be emptied is helpful in our thinking about the Holy Spirit. We receive and are filled with the Holy Spirit only for the Holy Spirit to be poured out onto the community for its own benefit.

In the church, we fall in love with the idea of being filled. We design worship to be inspirational. We go to Bible studies to be nourished by God's word. Sunday school, teaching moments and confirmation programmes are part of our church so that we may learn and grow. And yet, the follow-up to such activity must be that we do something with the inspiration, we must respond to the nourishment we receive, we must allow our growth to affect who we are and what we do in life.

The first church was filled by the Holy Spirit on that first Pentecost for the very purpose of them emptying themselves out on the community by proclaiming the good news in ways that every person could make sense of. The heart and soul of the church's

witness to faith is that of proclamation. The first action of the Holy Spirit as it fills these first followers is that of proclamation. As God initiates and begins to do God's work in the world, God first empowers the witness of proclamation. The scripture is quite clear as to the source of the church's proclamation of faith: the Holy Spirit of God.

The Holy Spirit is the initiator of the church, the One who begins or births the church, the One upon which the church is based and gives the church its mission.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, fill us to be emptied for Your purpose and for Your glory. Amen.

Let's do coffee

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-  Service Times

Chapel: 7am & 5:30pm

Sanctuary: 8am, 10am & 6pm

Wesley Hall: 6pm (Youth)

Children's Church: 8am, 10am & 6pm



A group of people gathers regularly to take turns answering a single question. In 18th century English, Wesley asked, "How does your soul prosper?" or "How is it with your soul?" Today we might say, "How's your spiritual life?"

Take the message from the Sunday sermon into deeper learning by joining or forming a small group. If you do not belong to a group yet, you are welcome to sign up by contacting Nick (082 808 1452) or Ria (063 020 4639).