

MEET THE HOLY SPIRIT
'GOD IS' SERIES - WEEK 1
Dan Burrell

Good morning Life Fellowship. My name is Dan and I am one of the teaching pastors here. We are glad to see you this morning as we begin a new series called 'God Is.' Last week we kind of began our new year with Pastor Ben and I taking some time to tell you about some of the things we hope to see happen. We looked at last year and we looked at the year ahead. If you were not here, let me urge you to go to our website and to the media page and take some time to look at some of the things we hope to see happen in the coming months, as well as get an update on some of the things that have happened in the last few months.

You know I appreciate very much so many of you who have sent me a email, or gave Pastor Ben a call, or when you see us in the hall here, or in the community, and you have encouraged us by telling us what God is doing in your lives. Even since last Sunday it has been amazing how we have seen God just doing some things across the campus.

For instance, this morning as I came in, someone stopped me and told me something exciting that I didn't even have time to tell the service hosts, because this month we are raising money for the Crisis Pregnancy Center of Lake Norman and the Pregnancy Resource Center. All of the money from those filled baby bottles will be given to them. And this morning before the service someone in this church told me that for the first six thousand dollars that is raised that they will match that amount. So every dollar that you give up to six thousand dollars will get doubled; isn't that wonderful? (*Applause*). Praise the Lord for that. I hope that inspires you to be able to fill a baby bottle up.

Yesterday I was going back and forth with a friend of mine on something we have been working on for literally months, we finally got confirmation that on the first Sunday in May we are going to have Bishop Oscar Muriu visiting with us. He is the pastor of the largest evangelical church in Nairobi, Kenya, that is called Nairobi Chapel. They run 6,000 on Sundays and they do not own a building. Well, I take that back, they own one building, and it is a bathroom. Everything else is done in tents. It is one of the most amazing congregations I have ever been with, or worshipped with. They are starting one hundred churches in international gateway cities around the world.

You are going to want to just cancel your vacation, or do whatever you have to do to be here on the first Sunday in May. It is going to be one of the most incredible opportunities that we have had in a very long time to be able to hear from Bishop Oscar Muriu of the Nairobi Chapel in Kenya.

Last week we were working on our podcast list for next year. Many of you don't know Pastor Ben's wife, Liz Rudolph, but she is one of the most gifted articulate people ever and she is a goal setting fiend. Let me tell you that we did two podcasts this week

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that will be out next week and you need to listen to them. If you have not been listening to Life Talks, you need to do so on the issue of 'How to Meet Your Goals in 2020,' which looks at the spiritual aspects of goal setting. It is incredible.

By the way, many of you remember Mike Campbell who was one of our elders here and he was also our Small Group Pastor. He had major surgery last week. I have been in touch with him and he is doing much, much better but he is still in a huge amount of pain yet. We are going to give you an opportunity on your way out today to give toward his medical expenses. They are facing \$21,000 out of pocket expenses, so as you leave today we are having a special offering to help them with that.

The ladies had a training session yesterday with their leadership team for our ladies ministry. They are going to have one of the most fantastic studies coming up beginning this week and going throughout the spring and I hope you won't miss that.

Last Wednesday night our men's Conqueror Series kicked off. This is for guys working towards maintaining sexual purity. We had teenagers here, we had young men here, and we had older guys here, and it was off to a great start. I wish I could tell you all of the many different things that are going on, but it is impossible. So please stay connected, please keep communicating to us, please check out our Facebook page and website and listen to our announcements. There are so many things going on and we want you to feel connected.

By the way if you weren't here last Sunday night you missed a super blessing. We had a great fellowship and our Oxygen Choir did their Germany concert and it was just off the hook. I couldn't believe how great it was. There are so many things to get involved in, so please make 2020 the year you hear from God as you study His Word and you listen for His Spirit.

And that is what we are talking about today. What does it mean to know the Spirit of God? Today as I come to this message I need you to understand it is an introductory message to this series that we are going to be in for the next several weeks. This message is constructed a little differently than I typically do because it is an introductory message. We are going to have a long introduction to the introductory message, so bear with me if you will please. And then in the last few minutes we are going to pound home just a boatload of Scripture as I begin this morning the process of introducing you to the Holy Spirit.

Maybe you are thinking, *'Dan, what are you talking about? We are Christians. We know God. There is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We just sang about it. What in the world are you doing talking about the Holy Spirit?'* But today

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as we begin this I want you to understand that this is a doctrine that many of us know about but maybe we don't know as personally as we should. Many of us look at the Holy Spirit through a context that is either distorted, or inaccurate, or sometimes even tinged with fear or just misinformation.

And so throughout the course of the next several weeks we are going to be looking at various facets of the Holy Spirit - how He works in us, what His role in the Godhead is, and how we can tap into who He is in our lives in a real and meaningful way. The Holy Spirit is one of the most difficult to understand aspects of what is commonly called, 'The Mystery of the Trinity.' And the Trinity is the term that we use to describe the three unique, yet equal dimensions of God.

You know every time I talk about the Trinity I always feel like I need to stop and re-explain myself. Even using the word dimensions causes me a little angst because when you understand the fullness of the Trinity and its theological implication, it is very difficult to explain it using English language, or even the human language. And that is because God is greater than our ability to describe, or to paint, or to write, or to communicate all that He is. All we can do is just keep approaching it over and over and over again. So this Trinity, sometimes known as the Godhead, is composed of God the Father, God the Son who is Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit. And we see all three parts of God, all three dimensions of God from the very beginning in the book of Genesis all the way through the conclusion of Scripture with the book of Revelations.

There is a Hebrew word for the Holy Spirit that is introduced to us in Genesis Chapter 1. And it is the word *ruach*. That is a fun word to say, particularly if you have a cold. But if you are going to say it like a Hebrew would then you kind of have to clear your throat at the end of the word. But *ruach* is how the Scripture references the power and the presence of God in His spirit form.

In this Hebrew word, and remember I am an old English teacher, so sometimes we have to stop, because as I have explained before, words have two dimensions, or two sides of one coin. One is called the denotation which is the dictionary definition. So when I say denotation I think of the letter 'D' and think of the dictionary definition. This is the technical term that we would use for any word in the human language.

The other side of the word dimension is the connotation, and that deals with the feeling that we get when we hear the word. And sometimes that is more subjective. Sometimes when you use the connotation of a word it can mean different things at different times to the same individual. Or it can mean different things to different people at the same time. For example when I say, 'love,' some of you are thinking, 'Oh, I love my girlfriend, or my boyfriend.' Others might think, 'I love my kids.' Others might

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think, '*I love pizza.*' Others might think, '*I love my country.*' Others might think, '*I love short sermons.*' (Laughter.)

But whatever you may think about when you hear the word love, it could be something different for each of us. But we use a singular word to describe it and that is the connotation. So when we hear the Hebrew word *ruach* the definition of it is the spirit and the presence and the power of God, but there is also this connotation that references energy. *Ruach*, as it describes energy can have several usages, or several connotations to it. There are several examples of it. For instance, if you are outside and it is windy like it was outside at about 9 o'clock last night you got your hair ruffled. Why was that? It was because the energy of the wind would blow your hair, or it would blow the grass in the field. That is *ruach* in a form.

It could also be used to describe the energy of vitality. For instance, have you ever taken a real deep breath and felt a little buzz, or a little sense of vitality? That is literally what the Hebrews would refer to as *ruach*. And by the way many times the Scripture refers to the Holy Spirit as a rushing, mighty wind. And we talk about it being the breath of God or the breath of life, the vitality, the energy. We talk about the Holy Spirit being the power of God.

Now can you draw a picture of the Holy Spirit? What do we end up doing? We draw a picture of a dove, right? Why do we do that? It is because in the New Testament we read about the dove coming down on Jesus when He was baptized. Or we talk about the flame of fire because that is what is said that kind of appeared over the heads of the apostles and the disciples when the church was beginning to be formed in the book of Acts. But those descriptions are not adequate because I can't draw the wind. All I can do is draw what I think the impact of the wind looks like. I can show grass bending, or hair being messed up, or the impact after a hurricane. We can't see the wind but we know it is there because we see the consequences of its presence. And that is true of God as well.

So it is hard to describe, and it is hard to be able to share it with someone unless you have experienced it yourself. This week I was having lunch with one of the finest young men I know. He is a college student and he and his family come to church here, and we were discussing some spiritual things. He said he wanted to tell me about something that had happened to him. And he said, '*It is almost like I have to tell you about it. It is like I am compelled to tell you about it.*' He said, '*I was lying in my bed, and I was praying and worshipping. I was praying, and the more I prayed something happened to me, and it was almost like an out of body experience. I felt almost detached from my body and I felt kind of an energy. At that moment I felt so close to God that I didn't want it to stop. I was thinking about God and His Word and what He had done for*

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me, and I had the strangest sensation that I can't even describe. But when it was done I felt like I needed to tell somebody about it. I told my parents and my friends because I wanted people to know this.'

I said to him, *'Thank you for sharing that with me because literally this is what I experienced within the previous hour before meeting you for lunch as I have been studying ruach and the energy of God.'* There are times when God can feel so close, so near to us, when His Word is working in our heart, in our life, when we understand a little glimpse of how great He is, how majestic He is, that it impacts us on a spiritual level that defies our ability to describe it.

Now some of you are just scared to death right now because I am talking about something that is supernatural. And there are some of you who are the real logical type and you say you have to have evidence, you have to have proof, you don't deal with feelings, just with facts, and I get it. But I want you to understand something - if we are going to believe in the supernatural aspects of God that created everything we see out of nothing, if we are going to believe in the supernatural attributes of God that raised Jesus from the dead, if we are going to believe in the supernatural aspects of God that allowed miracles to happen, then we have got to acknowledge that the power of God that lies within the believer through His Holy Spirit is as real, and as supernatural as anything that we can imagine.

And all of those times when we experience that, when we sense that, when we learn about that, have to be brought into alignment with that which is not subjective; it is objective. That is Scripture, and we cannot afford to deny its reality simply because we do not understand it fully. That is why we want to talk about this with you as the church.

And the way that the Hebrew writers used this term *ruach* to describe the invisible power and life giving elements of the Godhead, this word is used throughout the Old Testament and it is also used in Greek in the New Testament. It is the word that was used to describe Joseph's ability to understand dreams. It was the word used to describe the human architect designers of the Old Testament tabernacle's inspiration, for creating the elements and the furniture that we studied a little over a year ago. It is the word that was used to describe the prophetic words of the prophets throughout the Old Testament as they declared the message, the power and authority of God and called Israel back to repentance.

In the New Testament we see the Holy Spirit rest on Jesus at His baptism. It is representative of the power of God to create and to make alive in that which was spiritually dead, and in us who were spiritually dead in our sins who have been born again. It is the Spirit of God, that Holy Spirit that quickens us, or makes us alive.

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We also see the Holy Spirit in the resurrection of Jesus Himself made possible. We see the Holy Spirit at the founding of the church in Jerusalem on Pentecost. Since the time of Christ's return to Heaven it is the Holy Spirit that resides permanently in the lives of those born again. We are speaking of the supernatural here. We cannot see it with our eyes, but we can experience it in our lives. We observe it not by seeing it concretely, but we do see it as His consequences in what we say, do, believe and practice, and even in how we understand Scripture.

If you are this committed thinker, this concrete thinker, this committed naturalist, the idea of the Holy Spirit can run the range from unbelievable to '*this is a little bizarre.*' And I get that. He is without a doubt mysterious. That is why when we talk about the Trinity, sometimes we refer to it as 'the mystery of the Trinity.'

It is also possible to approach, or interpret the Holy Spirit subjectively, as with all matters that we have the potential to wrestle with as being subjective, we have to have an objective standard whenever possible. Subjective deals with feelings; objective deals with facts or truths. So that it will help us understand and identify that which is really real. And for Christians this is how we do it - we look at the Bible. We always examine the Bible to put our feelings, and our experiences, and our opinions, and our thoughts, and our beliefs into alignment with what is really real - which is God. That is why it is important that we study the Word of God. That is why when you come to Life Fellowship Church we have made the commitment to you that we are not going to give you self-help messages, we are not going to give you five steps to success, we are not going to give you a lot of humorous stories and witticisms at the expense of teaching you the truth of the Word of God.

At times this means you have to kind of lean forward a little bit and at times it means you have to kind of listen attentively. Sometimes it means you go to your Life Community after church and you discuss it a little further. We want you to do that; in fact we provide the Life Community leaders with the notes of the messages so that you can discuss it with them further. We want you to read more. There is no way that Pastor Ben or I, or anyone else who comes behind this pulpit can give you all the information about any topic in the time that is allotted to us. Volumes have been written on the Holy Spirit and there is no way that we can adequately plumb all that can be said. Not this morning as I introduce it, and not in this series as Pastor Ben and I try to educate you over the course of the next several weeks. But our goal is to at least introduce you to Him. Pastor Ben mentioned last week when he told you we would be starting this series that for too many the Holy Spirit has been engaged from a position that is extreme. We have ignored Him in many cases on one hand, and in other cases as Pastor Ben said last week, we have abused the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

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Before I get into the introduction of the Holy Spirit with you, I want to just kind of deal with those two extremes for just a moment. We ignore Him when we fail to acknowledge His immediate presence in our lives. And you know when we ignore God that has to be considered offensive. About a year and a half ago my SUV of twelve years gave up the ghost. And I mean when my vehicles give up the ghost they are begging to be taken to the junk yard. I like to drive them to 200,000 plus miles. And this one was dead serious - it was done - no more.

So I did what I absolutely hate doing. Don't you hate going to the car lots? I am at the point in my life that I would rather go to the proctologist than go to the car dealership. (*Laughter.*) I haven't been yet, but if I have to choose between the two I am going with the doctor. I hate buying a car. So my wife and I went to a local car dealership, but I am not going to tell you which one. Now I don't buy new cars, and I am not trying to be pious about that, but I am just such a tightwad. I just can't bring myself to take the personal hit on that depreciation the first year or so.

So we were at this used car lot, and you know the salesman starts right in. If you are a car salesman God bless you, I love you, but I don't know how you do what you do. You know the game, right? First of all the salesman tried to take my car keys, and thankfully my vehicle was dead so it didn't matter what it was worth so no car keys for him. Then he was like, '*What are you looking to spend?*' And I am saying to myself, '*Probably not nearly as much as you want me to spend.*' Then we are sitting at this table and my blood pressure is already going up from the stress and tension. And maybe you have noticed that I shake my legs a lot. It is kinetic energy, and it is the most relaxing thing for me to do. I can't explain it, I don't drink, I just shake my legs, and that is how I relax.

Now my wife is such a gem, she sees my legs bouncing a million miles an hour, and she knows I am trying to get rid of the stress, so she puts her hand on my knee and tries to get me to relax. And about that time the salesman says, '*We want you to meet our finance officer.*' Well, I don't finance my cars either. I am a Dave Ramsey kind of guy and I am not going to finance my car. But the salesman insists that I meet this finance officer. So he disappears for a long time and then he brings back this guy who comes in and sits down. And then the weirdest thing happened. This finance guy is extremely awkward, and he sticks out his hand to my wife to shake her hand. And he won't even make eye contact with me. So I clear my throat to get his attention and I said, '*I am her husband.*' He still doesn't even look over at me. Then there was the most awkward three minute conversation ever as he discussed financing, etc. and he never once looked me in the eye. It was like I wasn't even there.

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Now, I was looking for a reason to be offended as I just wasn't happy about looking for another vehicle. But at that moment, in the quietness of my heart, I thought, *'You are the last person I will ever get a car from. You have ignored me. You have insulted me.'* Later my wife told me that this is what women feel like all the time. But I didn't like being ignored. I didn't like feeling irrelevant. I didn't like feeling so unimportant. And no, I did not buy a car from there.

How offended must God be that He literally lives in us and we can go days, weeks, months ignoring His very presence in our hearts and in our lives? *'Oh but I pray. I pray.'* And how do we often pray? *'Our Heavenly Father.'* That's what we do. And many times we close our prayers by saying, *'In Jesus' name.'* When I went to that car dealership, I met the salesman and the sales manager. And they were very friendly to me. But the finance guy, who was integral to the whole process, ignored me. Now I realize that illustration does not fit perfectly with God, and that God is not a finance manager. But the fact remains that many of us talk about God the Father, we walk about God the Son but when it comes to God the Holy Spirit we are almost afraid to mention Him. And we ignore Him because we don't understand Him. And that is tragic.

So many today walk unplugged from the power of the Holy Spirit because we act like He doesn't even exist. On the other hand, there are those who have abused the doctrine of the Holy Spirit by twisting who He is and what He is here to do for unbiblical purposes, or in unbiblical ways. Now during this series we are not going to dive deep into the sign gifts that were used and demonstrated by the apostles in the early days of the church. But we cannot ignore the fact that the manifestation of what are called the sign gifts took place then. There are four of them primarily - the speaking in languages we do not naturally speak so that others can comprehend what is being said about the gospel; the miraculous and sudden supernatural healings that sometimes occurred; the few contexts of the apparent resurrection of those who had been declared physically dead; and then finally prophetic utterances.

These are areas that to this day can cause significant controversy in evangelical church and institutions of theology. Were they temporary gifts? Were they permanent gifts? Were they indications of something? And often what we end up doing is relegating the Holy Spirit to this controversy that we want to debate, argue, divide and get cranky about. And we miss all the other aspects, all the other things about the Holy Spirit. And while Ben and I know that some of you would absolutely love for us to jump into the thick of this - that is not going to be the purpose for this series. Our focus is going to be on those clearly known aspects of the Holy Spirit. If you want to pursue additional study on the sign gifts Pastor Ben and I would be very happy to direct you to other resources for private study, or to converse with you privately.

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But what is undeniable is that there have been those who have exploited supernatural elements of the Holy Spirit's power in history to draw people to themselves. And in so doing they have introduced characteristics and actions that they have assigned as the workings of the Holy Spirit, which clearly are inconsistent with sound theology and orthodox doctrine and which too often traveled into the domain of heretical teaching and practices.

God does not give us the Holy Spirit so that we can attract attention to ourselves. God does not demand that we show certain demonstrations of the Holy Spirit in our lives in order to prove that we are believers, or to convince others that we are worthy of following. God is not the author of confusion, and those who would manipulate this vital doctrine by turning Him into some kind of circus side show, or by trying to convince others that they have an anointing that is not available to all believers are on very dangerous and at times even damnable turf. And you should mark those and avoid them.

God does not give people new Scripture. He does not contradict the completed canon of the Word of God with new revelation. He does not invite unruly conduct like barking, or screaming, or flailing. And you can find those all over the Internet who would assign those marks to the Holy Spirit. God does not manifest Himself in ways that make individuals seem special or powerful or unique. He has not instructed us to handle snakes and do spiritual psychic readings under the authority of the church.

But as a result of these excesses and some cases that often create a flamboyant attention, some have fled the very powerful and dynamic work of the Holy Spirit that is available to all who obediently walk in the Spirit and know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. And both the abuse of, and the ignoring of the Holy Spirit are tragic and frankly dangerous to us who desire to know God and to live Him out in our lives.

So as we start off this series, I am going to give you some truths this morning to help us begin the process of introducing us again, or for the first time to the Holy Spirit who lives within every one of us who knows Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Four things that we need to remember about the Holy Spirit. Again, this list is not going to be exhaustive because that is impossible, but I am going to give you four things I would like for you to kind of remember.

Number one - the Spirit of God is present. Now we are going to run through a whole bunch of Scripture real quickly. You probably won't be able to follow along in your Bibles because I am going to go through it rapidly, but you can write the references down and then go back and study them later. You can even ask me for the notes of this message and I will be glad to send them to you. But first of all the Holy Spirit has always existed, beginning even with His presence at creation. Genesis Chapter 1 and verse 2

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says this: “*And the Spirit* (that’s the word *ruach*) *of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*” In fact God Himself said while He was creating mankind, “*Let us make man in our image.*” The Holy Spirit was present, as was Christ, as part of the Trinity at the creation.

Secondly - the Holy Spirit was with Israel. If you remember we studied Israel and the tabernacle last year. What stood above the tabernacle? Above the tabernacle during the day there was a pillar of cloud and during the night there was a pillar of fire. What was this? That was the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament before Christ gave us the Holy Spirit as the comforter in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit dwelt near His people. It was available to His people and it interacted with His people which were the children of Israel. But it did not dwell inside of His people, and that is why they had to have the tabernacle. That is why they built the temple where the Shekinah Glory, which was the Holy Spirit of God, was above the Mercy Seat which was in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle in the wilderness. The Holy Spirit of God was visible and it was real but it did not dwell in the children of Israel.

The third thing is - the Holy Spirit of God was on Jesus. We know that He was present in the life and ministry of Jesus. We know in Matthew Chapter 3 and verse 16 when Jesus was baptized that immediately He came up from the water and behold the heavens were opened to Him and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on Him. This is a supernatural moment whereupon God was validating once again for those who were in observance the ministry, the authority, the presence of God in the person of Jesus Christ His Son.

The fourth thing is - the Holy Spirit fell upon the church. He was present upon the church found in Acts Chapter 2 and verses 1 through 4. “*When the day of Pentecost came they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind* (again there is that energy that we talked about), *came from Heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be* (here we go again) *tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. And all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.*”

So we know that the Holy Spirit of God is real and present. He was present at creation; He was present in the Old Testament with the children of Israel; He was present upon Jesus; and He was present upon the early church. He came upon the early church and resided in them. He was present in the lives of the apostles. He will be present at the resurrection. He will be present during the reign of Christ. He will be present

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forevermore in Heaven at the very throne of God because He is God. And He is in you when you know God - and knowing that, we need to acknowledge Him.

That brings me to the second thing that we need to always remember, and that is this - the Spirit of God is personal. He is personal. The Holy Spirit is active in our salvation. Romans Chapter 3 and verse 11 reminds us of this. ***“No one understands; no one seeks for God.”*** You and I on our own are not naturally God seekers; we are God avoiders. We are not naturally on our own looking for righteousness; we are committed to sin. We are depraved and without hope.

Then what draws us to God? What gives us a thirst for righteousness? What makes us want God? It is that Holy Spirit of God that draws all men to Him. If you know Christ as your Savior, there was a time in your life when you began realizing that you were a sinner without hope, and that there was more to life than this, and that you needed to know God in order to have real life, real purpose, real meaning and a real understanding of why we are here at all.

Maybe you are wondering what that was? What was that thing that drew you to Him? What was that thing that made you ask questions? What was the thing that made you look into Scripture? What was that thing that made you listen to someone sharing their testimony? What was that thing that made you want to cry out to God and ask forgiveness of your sins? What was that that made you realize you were damned without hope apart from what Jesus had done for you? What was it that gave you the faith that was strong enough to believe that Jesus loved you and died for you? What was it that drew you to God?

And the answer is - God Himself drew you to Him and He does that through the work of His Holy Spirit. It is that Holy Spirit that says we are sinners without hope but for Jesus. It is that Holy Spirit that says there is a way to Heaven, there is a way to forgiveness, there is a way to reconciliation. And it is that Spirit of God that calls us to redemption.

John Chapter 6 and verse 44 says, ***“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.”*** How does He draw us - through His Holy Spirit. Ephesians Chapter 1 and verse 13 says, ***“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.”*** He is active in our salvation. He is who baptizes us into the body of Christ. He is the one who resurrects us as surely as He resurrected Jesus from the tomb. The Holy Spirit turned dead Dan into living Dan. And the Holy Spirit turned you who were dead in your sins and trespasses and gave you life everlasting.

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Second - the Holy Spirit dwells in us personally. And this is the wonderful thing about God that I hope we never forget. We are the dwelling place of God. God lives in us. He tells us that where two or more are gathered together in His name, He is there. Why? It is because He lives in us. I Corinthians Chapter 3 and verse 16 says, “***Do you not know that you are God’s temple, and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?***” Do you understand that God is in this room right now in you and in me who know Him as Savior? God is with us. Immanuel - Jesus came - God with us. He gave us the Holy Spirit which is God in us.

The third thing is - the Holy Spirit is part of our sanctification and growth. God gave us the Holy Spirit so that we would desire the right things after our salvation. Galatians Chapter 5 and verse 16 says, “***But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.***” You know one of the ways you know that you are a Christian is that your sin bothers you. And do you know why your sin bothers you? It is because it bothers God and God lives in you. And sometimes people say to me, ‘*Oh I wonder sometimes if I am a Christian or not?*’ And that is actually a sign that you are a Christian, because if you weren’t a Christian you wouldn’t care if you were a Christian or not. But the fact that you know God and He lives in you and He convicts you of your sin and makes you think, ‘*Oh why did I say that? Why did I think that? Why did I do that?*’ It means your heart is grieved and the reason your heart is grieved is because God lives in you and He is grieved. That is the work of the Holy Spirit toward our sanctification, toward our spiritual growth and toward our Christlikeness.

The fourth is this - and I would like to preach on this all day long because it is such a great truth, but it is this - the Holy Spirit is part of our prayers. Let me tell you that this encourages me so much. I am not the most transparent guy you know but there have been some things going on in my life where I have literally not known how to pray. There have been times when I am like, ‘*God, where do I start? I don’t even know what the answer should be because I don’t even know what to pray for. I don’t even know what I should be hoping for.*’ And my burdens are so intense, and my heart is so broken I don’t even know what to do. And then I think of Romans Chapter 8 and verses 26 and 27 where it says, “***Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit (and notice what it says next because it is so important) Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.***”

The Spirit of God is personal. It is not an ‘it.’ It is not a force. It is not a being. It is God and He Himself intercedes for us with groanings. When words defy me, I just moan and groan. And the Holy Spirit, “***And He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.***” Do you understand that? One of the works of the Holy Spirit is that He is our

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intercessor before God, and He stands before God and He says, '*Dan is messed up right now. He is not thinking straight. He is absolutely overwhelmed and underneath a lot of stuff right now. But I, his intercessor, with words that Dan can't even understand appeal to God's mercy and grace and authority and makes intercession for him.*' Even when I don't get it, even when I don't understand it, He is there for me. And what a great promise that is.

The fifth thing is this - the Spirit of God is persistent. And that is such a great promise as well. The first thing I want you to know about this is that we receive all of the Holy Spirit at salvation that we will ever have and are ever going to need. God is not playing a shell game with us. We don't have the Spirit one day and not the next. We are not saved one day and lost the next. We are not looking for Him one day and can't find Him and then the next day you can. He is always present with us. He baptizes us into the body of Christ; we become joint heirs of Jesus; we become literally a son of God. He makes Himself available to us through prayer and intercession. In John Chapter 14 and verse 16 Jesus said, "***I will ask the Father and He will give you another helper to be with you forever.***" You never have to go looking for God because He is with us. Maybe you think He feels distant sometimes; it doesn't mean He is not there. It may just simply mean you are not remembering the right truth.

The next thing we do is spend our lives working at how much we will yield to the Holy Spirit. Part of our communion with God is that we have to constantly be remembering that God lives in us and it is our responsibility to yield to Him. I put it this way - for many years I knew Christ, for many years I had the Holy Spirit in me - He never left me and He never forsook me - He was there but I wasn't doing Him correctly. It was not a matter of whether I had the Holy Spirit; it was a matter of whether the Holy Spirit had me. And the way the Holy Spirit gets me is when I yield. When we read Romans Chapters 5 through 8 we will realize who God is, we will realize His authority, and we can understand how to move ourselves into alignment with Him. We will understand it is by yielding. The process to Christ likeness is to know, reckon, and yield. And when that happens we walk in the Spirit.

And that is what God wants us to do - to walk in victory, to walk in Spirit, to walk in forgiveness, to walk in grace, to walk overcoming sin, to walk in holiness, to walk in compassion, to walk in mercy, to walk in power and authority of the Word of God, to walk with hope. And this morning if you feel like you are under sin, you are addicted, you are a hostage, you are broken, and you can't be forgiven, I want you to understand that God has already forgiven you. Now you need to yield it to Him. God loves you, now you need to accept it. God is available for you, now embrace it.

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The Scripture tells us not to be drunk with wine which is debauchery, but to be filled with the Spirit. When the Scripture tells us that we need to be filled with the Spirit it literally means to come under the control of it. The reason Scripture uses alcohol is because if you have ever known someone who has gotten drunk you realize they are not themselves. We call it being 'under the influence,' DUI - under the influence. But whenever we are under the influence of God, He directs our paths, He helps us make the right decisions, He helps us overcome temptation, He helps us to avoid sin, and He helps us to walk in victory. And that is why God said, "***Be led by the Spirit.***"

Galatians Chapter 5 and verses 17 - 24 says, "***For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, division, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no Law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.***" And that is because of the work of the Holy Spirit.

The last thing is this - the Spirit of God is powerful. The Holy Spirit calls. He is calling you today if you don't know Him as Savior. He is calling you to forgiveness and reconciliation and hope and peace with God. And this morning He will call you as a believer to do right, to follow Him, to hear His Word, to obey and to follow Him in faith and trust.

But He also convicts, and that is a wonderful thing. He doesn't condemn; He convicts. For those of us who know Christ we understand there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. We don't walk as dead men walking; we are born again; we are alive. So instead of condemning us He convicts us and says, '*Dan, you are better than that. You don't have to live that way. You don't have to think those thoughts. You don't have to struggle this way.*' And He convicts us as He calls us.

The Holy Spirit also counsels us. And that counselling is a wonderful work of the Holy Spirit in that He uses His Word to teach us. And you know there are times when I open my Bible and I study it that I think, '*Shazam,*' like Gomer Pyle the great theologian said. (*Laughter.*) '*Shazam, I have never seen that before.*' And you know why I never saw that before? It was because I didn't need it before. But now I am reading it, and the Holy Spirit is saying, '*Dan, this is you right now. Listen up.*' And He is counselling me.

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He draws me near and His Word becomes real. But you know if you are not in the Word of God you can't get counselled from Him. You have to be in His Word to be counselled. That's the way He speaks to us. We have to plug in to the power of the Holy Spirit.

Then the Holy Spirit also comforts us. That is a wonderful work of the Holy Spirit. I am comforted when I know He is making intercession for me. I am comforted when I know He prays when I have no words. I am comforted when I know that He treats me as someone who is not under condemnation anymore. That is why Jesus said He was sending us a helper, a comforter.

The final thing is this - He connects. That is the cool thing about being part of a church, about being a part of a Life Community, about being a part of the family of God - we connect. I love the fact there are times I will go through an airport and I will see someone reading the Bible and I immediately am drawn to them. Do you know why? It is because the Spirit that lives in them lives in me and we want to connect. I love the fact that sometimes I will be praying over my meal and someone will come up to me and say, *'Did you just pray over your meal in this restaurant? Are you a Christian?'* And I find out that they are Christians too. Why do people do that? It is because we want to connect. If you don't want to connect with other believers it might be because you are not listening to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit draws us to the fellowship of believers.

The Holy Spirit is constantly available to us to perform transformative work in our lives that includes instruction, comfort, discernment and *ruach* - energy, life, hope, victory in Jesus, in the Father and in the Holy Spirit. Here is my challenge as I close. This week will you intentionally acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life as you go about it. I mean it is this simple: when you wake up in the morning before you put your feet on the floor, say to the Holy Spirit that you want to acknowledge Him in your life today like you have never done it before; tell Him that you want to listen for Him, you want to hear from Him. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you take the right route to work, help you to have the right attitude the first time someone crosses you the wrong way today. Ask Him to show you someone around you that needs to hear your testimony. Ask Him to help you connect with someone else who is a Christian this week. Ask Him to show you someone who is searching for Jesus that you can encourage. Ask Him to give you wisdom when you are dealing with your kids, or to help you when you are studying for your tests at school. Ask Him to help you bless your husband or wife in an unusual way. Ask Him to show you someone today that you need to bless financially, or with your time, or with your talent.

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I promise you if you will acknowledge the Holy Spirit before you get up in the morning, God will do something in you and through you that you have never experienced before . We walk today in unnecessary cloudiness because for many of us He lives in us but we have never even really met Him.

Last week Pastor Ben asked the church to pray this prayer: *'God help us today to hear from you through your Spirit and through your Word.'* Let's bow our heads and close our eyes. In a moment I am going to ask us to pray that prayer together. And today if you need to know Christ as your Savior and He is calling you to salvation, will you come forward. We will have someone show you from the Bible what it means to be a Christian.

Maybe you have something going on in your life that you need prayer for. Go to the Prayer Room which is out the back and to the right where there is a room with a fireplace. There will be someone there who will pray with you. Maybe you need to join this church, maybe you need to be baptized, maybe you need to sign up for next week's Life Quest class, maybe you have questions, then just go straight out the back door to the Next Step Station and they will help you.

The Holy Spirit is speaking to you if you will listen to Him. He is either calling you to salvation, or He is calling you to be more like Jesus. Have you heard from Him today? Please pray with me in your heart: *'God help us today to hear from you through your Spirit and through your Word. And Father let it begin with me.'*

The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.