

“Knowing God: Who Is The Holy Spirit?”

I still remember the first time I saw it. I was in college. We were skiing at Sierra at Tahoe, which, (at the time), was Sierra Ski Ranch. It was my third year of skiing and I was getting to the point where I could actually get down the mountain pretty well.

They were moving at a fairly good speed and wearing bright red-colored vests, and that's what caught my attention. I remember watching the two of them (for a few moments) and, when they stopped, my curiosity took over. I skied over to where I could see a bit closer and it became obvious.

The one person was wearing a vest that said “Guide.” The other had one that said “Blind.” It blew me away. I thought, “How does that happen?” I mean, it's hard enough skiing when you have two good eyes and you can see where you're going. “How in the world do you navigate your way down these hills when you can't?”

I kept watching until I realized what they were doing. The guide would ski behind (or alongside) the one who was blind and would continually be giving instructions. “Go right, turn left, slow down, stop, skier coming in from the side”, and on it went, all the way down until the bottom.

I was amazed...but it was actually rather simple. The responsibility of the guide was to give instructions that would enable the blind skier to navigate his way down the hill. The responsibility of the skier was to give his complete trust and immediate response to the instructions of the guide. On his own, the blind skier never would have made it. Working together, doing what he was told, I'll never forget.

Today we're in the third week of our “Knowing God” series. It's a series designed to encourage us in the relationship we have with God and to challenge us to not sell God short when it comes to applying (in life) the things we know.

The premise is simple. It's back to the basics. It's painting a picture of who God is and what he has done (for us) and is able to do. And it's all based upon the reality that if we truly know this God and how great he is (how much we're loved), and if we take what we know and apply it in life, then it changes life. It changes our lives. It has to.

Now, I'm not going to go through all of what we covered in the first two weeks. God as our Father; we talked about the “who, the heart, and the how.” If you want to know “who” God is (we said), then start with his names. If you want to know his “heart,” then read some of the stories. God's heart is in favor of us. And if you want to know the “how”, then you need to make a commitment to spending time.

We challenged ourselves (in that first week) with the concept of “You and Two”...in worship, word, and prayer. (Remember that?) We said “you” find “two” and hold each other accountable...to being in worship, reading God's word, and spending time in prayer.

Now, if you've done that and you (already have your two), then keep it going. If you haven't, then find two others and start. We're going to be coming back to this throughout the year.

From there (in week two) it was God as the Son. We worked our way (last week) through the first four chapters of Matthew's gospel. Leading up to the calling of those first disciples, there are 20 different ways in which Jesus is described. It's a powerful description.

Based on what he says, who Jesus is, (we said) it's not surprising that those first disciples were willing (on the spot) to leave what they were doing and follow. This wasn't just another teacher and it still isn't. This is Jesus, God's Son, the one who came into this world not only to become our Savior, but who also calls us in this world as our Lord. (You can't pick and choose.) There's no middle ground.

Now, again, we're going to be coming back to this throughout the year. If you weren't here for those two weeks, then go back and listen (on-line) to what you missed. We all need to be on the same page. It's that important.

Today, it's the work of the Holy Spirit. Who is the Spirit, and why do we need the Spirit in our lives? What I want to do today is to focus on the passage we just read (from John, chapter 16) and then (before we

close) say a few things to set the stage for what's happening next week, where we'll be laying out a new vision for our future, based upon where God has been leading.

Let's get into it. There's an outline in your bulletin, if you want to write some of this down. John, chapter sixteen is where we're at. The subtitle for this section (in your Bibles) is "The work of the Holy Spirit." What Jesus is doing (in these verses) is preparing his disciples for what's soon to happen. What's soon to happen is that Jesus is going to die. He's going to cross. He's going to give his life for us.

Now, he's going to come back to life. (That's Easter, and it makes all the difference.) That's why (when we die), when our faith is in him, there's still hope, life beyond the grave. But after he dies (and comes back), he's going to go away into heaven. Forty days after Easter, Jesus ascends. (He returns.)

What he's saying in these verses, (what he's telling his disciples), is not to worry. Jesus is going to go away. (That's going to happen.) But when he (goes away), what's going to happen is he's going to send the Holy Spirit. Verse 13, (it says), "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth."

It's interesting (in this verse), the word Jesus uses, the word "guide", is the same word used to describe someone who guides a person who is blind, just like in that story of the blind skier. It literally means "one who leads the way."

Jesus wants us to know that when God saves us (in Jesus) he doesn't leave us on our own, (in the dark), to figure it all out. What he does is he leads us by his Spirit (in his light) so we're able to see.

Some of the names (the Bible gives) for the Spirit tell us how it happens. He's our Counselor. (He's there when we need advice.) He's our Comforter. (He's there when we hurt and need him the most.) He's our teacher, our encourager, our equipper. He's our Advocate (the Bible says), the one who stands beside us in everything we do. And (not only that), but he's our Guide. He gives us guidance.

If you look at what Jesus says in this passage, you see that the Holy Spirit has two ministries. He has a ministry to the sinner and a ministry to the saint. Verse 8 says, "When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt...in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment."

The Holy Spirit has a ministry to the sinner. It's a convincing ministry, a convicting ministry, and a converting ministry. He works in our lives to convince and convict and convert. (It happens to all of us.) He also has a ministry to the saint. Once we believe, he works to guide us and to lead us, and, more specifically, to guide and lead us "into all truth."

Truth is the main concern of the Holy Spirit. (We need to remember that.) That's what the Spirit works to do. Jesus refers to him as "the Spirit of Truth" (John 14:17). He convinces, he convicts, he converts, and then he guides us into the truth. What he wants is for you and me to know the truth. And not just the truth as we might perceive it, (how the world might perceive it), but the truth of what's really true, found in God's Word.

Look at verse 12. Jesus says, "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes (verse 13), he will guide you into all truth."

Don't miss the blessing of that verse. Don't miss what Jesus is saying. "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when the Spirit comes, he'll help you understand what you now cannot."

In other words, (Jesus says) there's a lot God wants us to know, but we can't take it in all at once. And so, what he does, through his Spirit, is to help us understand (what we need to know) one truth at a time.

Think back on those first disciples. Jesus was with them for more than three years. He taught them. He showed them. He gave them examples, but they still didn't get it. When he died (and even after he rose), they were still afraid and still doubted. It was too much to take in. But what happens? When the Holy Spirit shows up (on the Day of Pentecost), they finally get it, and it all takes off.

It's the same with us. The Spirit works through us as we are ready. The Spirit works in us (one step at a time) to prepare us for what God wants, and for when he wants it.

Maybe you've noticed that. It's an important lesson. When it comes to God and to what he wants, the timing is more important than the time. (Did you hear that?) With God, the timing of what God wants (in your life) is more important than the time it takes for it to happen.

That's an important lesson for us (and a hard one) because, (for most of us), it's exactly the opposite. It's hard for us to wait. For most of us, when it comes to time, we want it to happen right away. But for God, it doesn't matter how much time it takes; what matters is the timing.

That's the work of the Holy Spirit. One step at a time: he convinces, he convicts, he converts, and then he guides. The Holy Spirit is the one who guides us, who helps us understand the truth (of God's Word) as we are ready to understand it.

It's like the story of the four-year old boy who had a crush on this little girl, so he decided to write her a letter. His Mom walked in and said, "What are you doing?" He said, "I'm writing a love letter to my girlfriend." She said, "Why are you doing that, how are you doing that? You haven't learned yet how to write?" The boy said, "That's alright. She hasn't learned yet how to read."

Now, that's not quite the same, but it's similar. Anyone can read the Bible without the help of the Holy Spirit, but no one can understand the Bible apart from the Holy Spirit. We need the Holy Spirit, if we're going to understand the truth. The Holy Spirit is our guide.

In a similar way, the Holy Spirit helps us remember what we've learned. He not only guides us into the truth, but helps us to remember the truth. He guides us so that we can remember.

Has it ever struck you that Jesus never wrote anything down? (I mean, really?) Of all things he taught, wanted his followers to remember, he never wrote any of it down. How come? Because he knew the work of the Holy Spirit and what the Spirit would work to do when Jesus was no longer there.

John chapter 14 (vs. 25-26), "All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor (Jesus says), the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said."

Jesus didn't write it down, but the disciples did. And not because they remembered it verbatim, but because the Holy Spirit was there to remind them of what Jesus said. (Again, just think about it.) The reason we have the New Testament is because the disciples were reminded (by the Spirit) of what Jesus had taught.

Go through the books and you'll see how it all fits. Jesus said, "The Holy Spirit will bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." That promise gave us the gospels, those historical accounts of what happened in Jesus' life.

Jesus said, "The Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth, and whatever he hears he will speak." That promise gave us the epistles, those doctrinal letters inspired by God to some of the churches that (are still) of great benefit to us.

Jesus also said that "the Spirit will tell you what is yet to come." That promise (among other things) gave us the Book of Revelation, a prophetic letter, designed to give us a glimpse into what lies ahead.

Now, take the same idea and apply it in your own life. Have you ever been in a situation where (at the right time), at the right moment, God reminded you of something he had said or written or promised? You weren't thinking about it. It wasn't on your mind at all, but all of a sudden it was there?

If that's happened, (and when it happens), it's no coincidence. It's the reminding ministry of the Holy Spirit. It's the "helping us to remember" work of the one whose main job it is to guide us into the truth found in the Bible.

That's how the Spirit works. The Spirit guides us to know the truth. The Spirit helps us to remember the truth. And (from there) the Spirit enables us (and empowers us) to reproduce the truth.

Go back to verse 13. Jesus says, "The Spirit will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears." In other words, the Spirit's job is not to give us anything new (that Jesus never taught) or that the Father (somehow) forgot to include. (It's all there.) The Bible is our authority. It's God's Word to us. The Spirit's job is to take (what's already there) and reinforce it, and enable us to reproduce it.

What that means is that the Spirit will never lead you to do anything that is inconsistent with God's Word. (He will never do that.)

If God says something in his Word, then there's no new revelation (that isn't there) that will ever be given to take its place. If it's there, then it's there, and if says it (in God's Word), then you can take it and apply it (and count on it) in your life. You can build on it. You can bank on it.

People say, "I want to do what God wants in my life, but I don't know what that is? What am I supposed to do?" Do you know what that is? Do you know what I think happens more often than not? Do you know what I think Satan loves to see?

What he loves to see are two things. (Now, I want to be careful here.) We said the Holy Spirit has two ministries: one to the sinner and one to the saint. In a way (not too much different), Satan has two things in mind, as well.

What Satan wants for the world, for those outside the church (who don't know Jesus) what he wants is for the world to stay away. He wants the world to operate as if it has no need. He deceives. He dispels. He directs people to think that what they have (in their lives), on their own, is all they need.

And he's good at it. Just look at the world. Everyone thinks they're fine. They have no clue. But they're not. They need Jesus. He's the only answer. And that's the truth, no matter what the world thinks. It's true. But what Satan wants (for the world) is for the world to stay away, and he's working fulltime to make it happen.

The second thing Satan wants is for the church. What Satan wants (for the church), for those of us who know this God, who comes to us in three ways, what he wants for us is to know the Father (who he is, what he's done, how much we're loved); to trust the Son (why he was born, what he accomplished, where it all leads when we die); and to question the Spirit, to somehow have in our heads that it doesn't work, it's beyond our grasp, that God can work through some, but he can't (and he probably won't) work through me. That's what Satan wants, because when he gets what he wants, he wins and everyone else (including the world and the church and us) does not.

That's what he wants. He wants a group of folks (just like us) who come together on Sunday, who hear God's word and are challenged and encouraged in their faith, and then, who, (on Monday) and throughout the rest of the week, either forget what they've heard (and never use it) or fail to apply what they've heard and never make a difference.

That's what he loves to see. That's what Satan wants. Because when it happens, (in whatever ways), we question (or doubt) or (somehow) fail to trust in the power of the Holy Spirit, then we're stuck. And when we're stuck, we're paralyzed. And when we're paralyzed, we're non-factors in the kingdom...and that's what Satan wants.

And so let me close with this, and this is a lead-in to our Vision Sunday next week, to where God is leading us. Three things: #1: We need to be in God's Word. We need to be in God's Word. That's where it happens. That's how God speaks. That's where the Spirit does his work.

"You and Two." Worship, Word, and prayer. This is more than just a slogan. It's a gift God has given, it's the place where it happens, and it's a promise God has made. If we want to truly know God (and not just know about God), then we need to do it. Starting today, let's do it. There's no reason to wait.

#2: our default position (when it comes to our faith) should be one of action. Instead of waiting for God to speak, telling us what we don't know, we need to act on what we do.

Go through the Scriptures and that's what you'll find. The work of the Holy Spirit is best described by verbs. He breathes, he blows, he sends, he acts, he empowers, he invites.

The Christian life is no different. It's not stagnant. It's continually moving. It's not stationary or static. It's a life in which we are on the go, watching for ways to live it out, expecting results to happen, and trusting that when (we work) the Holy Spirit is at work through us.

It's not hard to figure out. The way to learn the will of God in an unknown area of your life is to obey the will of God in the known area of your life. Even (in those seasons) of life, as we wait for his still, small voice, we need to be moving.

And #3: Just as God, who comes to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, cannot be separated into three Gods, but is only one, so we (who are his children) cannot claim to be connected to one, if we're not also willing to trust and obey and connect with the other two.

It's simple. When God is your Father, Jesus is also your Savior and Lord, and the Spirit sends you out. When Jesus is your Savior and Lord, the Father is the one you serve, and the Spirit is the one you need to listen to and trust. And when the Spirit is the one you listen to and trust, that's when the Father is there to give you everything you need, and when Jesus is there to let you know you are on the right path.

My friends, if this community is ever going to be used to make an eternal impact in this world for Jesus, (and that's why we're here, that's what this is about), then we cannot wait for it to happen on its own. Nor can we even begin to think that we can do anything (for the kingdom) on our own. Blind as we are, making our way down this hill we call life, we need the Holy Spirit as our Guide. If we listen and we obey, it's going to happen.

Next week, we'll be sharing a vision that I (truly believe) God has given us (for this time) and in this place. Tell your friends who weren't here, to be here. Be sure to be here yourself. Our default position is one of action. It's time to move. Amen.