


# Christianity: The Basics

## The Holy Spirit is Not a Ghost

# TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

2020-10-8&11



A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

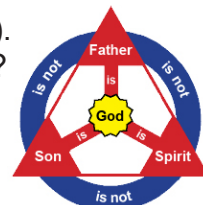
**Talk** together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11  
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

## Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you?  
...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?

- Look up the definitions of "contradiction" and of "paradox". What do you learn?  
Review and discuss paragraph 1 of "[1] Who is the Holy Spirit?" (see [Sermon Summary](#)).  
What do you think: is the Trinity a contradiction or a paradox? **Why** do you think that?

Read John 14:15-21, and see if you can explain this diagram of the mystery of the Trinity.



- Review and discuss paragraph 1 of "[2] What does the Holy Spirit do?" (see [Sermon Summary](#)).  
Humanity is **full of** "us versus them" tensions and conflict. **How** is the Holy Spirit the path to peace?

Read John 13:34-35. Is this sort of unity just "pie in the sky" naiveté? **Why** do you think that?

Read Acts 2:5, 9-11 and 41-47. How many cultures and ethnicities are identified in v. 9-11?  
How well would you **expect** such a diverse population to get along? **Why** do you think that?  
When washed of their sins and unified by the Holy Spirit, what did they do **with** and **for** each other (v. 41-47)?

Last Sunday Pastor Doug showed that, because "every spiritual blessing is **in Christ**" (Ephesians 1:3),  
**if** you have Christ, **then** you have every spiritual blessing, and if you **don't** have Christ, you have **nothing**.  
That being true, what role does evangelism play in bringing peace on earth?

- **With whom** do you have a fractured relationship?  
What should **your** next action be toward them?

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## Application-Challenge

- Get to know the Holy Spirit better by completing the "Digging Deeper" feature.
- Trust what the Holy Spirit teaches us about the first Advocate-Helper, Jesus Christ. Depend on him alone to be acceptable to God.
- Obey what the Holy Spirit teaches us to do in the book he wrote: the Bible.

# Sermon Summary (Key Text: John 14:15-26)

We are using the Apostles' Creed as an outline for examining some of the foundational beliefs of the Christian faith. The Creed declares: "I believe in the Holy Spirit." When it comes to the Trinity, without a doubt, the Holy Spirit is the most mysterious of the three. John 14-17 records Jesus' last opportunity to teach his disciples before going to the cross, so he carefully chose the most crucial for them to know and understand. These chapters are filled with teaching about the Holy Spirit. In John 14:15-26 Jesus taught three key truths about the Holy Spirit.

**[1] Who is the Holy Spirit?** The first thing to note is that the Holy Spirit is a person, not a force, a nebulous power, or an "it" (v. 17). Jesus called him "another helper" (v. 16). The Greek word translated as "another" means "another of the same kind." So the Holy Spirit is of the same divine essence as Jesus and the Father. Then Jesus said something intriguing in v. 18, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." In v. 23 he adds that he and his Father will make their abode in us. So Jesus said: "I'm leaving you—but when the Holy Spirit comes, I will be coming and my Father will be coming." Welcome to the dizzyingly unique and wonderful doctrine of the Trinity! One God in three distinct persons who are one in essence, so when you get the one you get them all. Has your heart ever melted with the joy and the awe at realizing that God is living within you? Ephesians 5 speaks about being filled with the Spirit, but we must not think in terms of a gas or a liquid or a force that we get more of. There's no technique for being "filled with the Spirit". No, no. Since the Holy Spirit is a person, to be full of a person is something like being in love, but it's a little more than that. It's like when an honored guest visits—you feel affirmed and excited; you live in anticipation. Has that happened to you? Have you been overwhelmed by the awareness of the glorious person in your life? But it's more than just a visit; "we have been made partakers of the divine nature." (2 Peter 1:4)—in a sense, we get God's very lifeblood. Are you full of the Spirit—living in the awareness of who's living right there in you?

**[2] What does the Holy Spirit do?** What the Holy Spirit does is multidimensional—where do we start?! Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will "be with you (plural) forever" (v. 16). When the Holy Spirit comes into your life, he doesn't just unite you to Christ, he unites you to everyone else who is united to Christ. The Holy Spirit puts us into community. You are bonded to every other Christian on the face of the earth—irrespective of culture, race, or temperament. The Holy Spirit bonds us together permanently. "The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Romans 5:5). Right now, you might have a little bit of the love of God for other believers, but the minute you die you'll have an infinite amount. There will be no end or interruption. But there's more!

The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of truth (v. 17). It is a common mistake to pit the work of the Holy Spirit against the Bible, saying: "Well, you have all your doctrine, all of your Biblical truth about the Holy Spirit, but I have the Holy Spirit. I have my experience." The Spirit of Truth always acts consistent with Scripture. The Holy Spirit inspired the Bible (v. 25-26). The Holy Spirit also anoints believers today to understand the truth he wrote (1 John 2:20-21; 1 Corinthians 2:12-13). Before I became a Christian, when I read the Bible it seemed as though there was a veil over it, but after I came to faith it was as if someone had turned the lights on! But the Holy Spirit not only illumines our minds, he actually brings God to us (v. 21b)! Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)—considered by many to be the greatest mind that America has ever produced—wrote this: *"I had the greatest delight in the Holy Scriptures...every word seemed to touch my heart. So much light exhibited by every sentence, and such a refreshing food communicated, that I could not get along in reading; often dwelling on the wonders contained in one sentence... In prayer I had an extraordinary view of the glory of the Son of God—his wonderful, great, full, pure and sweet grace and love, and his meek gentleness. The person of Christ appeared to me with an excellency great enough to swallow up all thought and conception. This continued about an hour, which kept me the greater part of the time in a flood of tears and weeping aloud."* Although we're not nearly as eloquent as Edwards, if you have the Holy Spirit, what I just read need not be completely foreign to you. The Spirit of Truth is the ultimate friend. He is called the "Helper" (v. 16). This Greek word is so rich; at other times it is translated as "Advocate", "Comforter", and "Counselor" (to name a few). No single English word conveys the fullness of its meaning. He's the ultimate friend. The Greek word literally means "to come alongside someone". The Holy Spirit is always with you, and always for you. He's the true friend who is willing to make a case against the enemy in your own heart: sin (John 16:8). He's also the true friend who bears witness that you're a child of God when you feel defeated. The Spirit comes into your heart, looks around your life, and he's appalled—but he doesn't give up on you. He is always working to sanctify you, to make you more like the Lord Jesus (Philippians 1:6).

**[3] How do we receive what the Spirit gives?** According to our text, we do two things: if you want the ministry of the second Advocate-Helper you have to (a) believe in the ministry of the first Advocate-Helper, and you have to (b) obey him. Only then will the Holy Spirit perform the ministry we've been discussing. As the second Helper-Advocate he tells us about the work of the first Helper-Advocate, Jesus Christ (1 John 2:1). Jesus Christ acts as our defense attorney, making our case before the Father. And the second Advocate points out to us the work of the first Advocate, giving us the infallible peace that comes from Jesus' infallible case. We also have to obey—to not "quench the Spirit". The Holy Spirit points us to Jesus, glorifies Jesus, shows us his beauty. Do you see the glory of the divine selflessness? Do you see the Father emptying heaven of his greatest treasure to come to earth to save us? Do you see Jesus Christ emptying himself of his glory? Do you see the Holy Spirit pointing away from himself to Jesus? Do you see the magnificence of the divine selflessness? Do you want to see the power of the Holy Spirit at work in your life? Then stop thinking about yourself all the time. Stop your self-centeredness and self-indulgence. Obey him. Serve God. Serve your neighbor and seek to glorify Jesus in all that you do. Then you will find the ministry of the ultimate friend flooding your life.

## Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

**"Five Question Bible Study"** (see page below) *is a simple way to study any passage. We can use it to learn about the Holy Spirit...*

**Monday**—Study Acts 5:1-13. **Who** is the Holy Spirit? How do you see his holiness here?

**Tuesday**—Study Psalm 139:7-12. **Where** is the Holy Spirit? How do you see his **divinity** here?

**Wednesday**—Study 1 Corinthians 2:6-16. **What** does the Holy Spirit know? What do believers know?

**Thursday**—Study Deuteronomy 6:4-5 & Isaiah 45:5-6. **How many** Gods are there?

**Friday**—Study Acts 1:8. What does the Holy Spirit **make us**? How can you give witness today?

**Saturday**—***In preparation for worshipping your risen Lord with your church family,*** study **Ephesians 2:11–22.**

Bible Text: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]

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# Leaders' Guide

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- 5 Read John 14:15-21, and see if you can explain this diagram of the mystery of the Trinity.
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- 9 Read Acts 2:5, 9-11 and 41-47. How many cultures and ethnicities are identified in v. 9-11?
- 10 How well would you **expect** such a diverse population to get along? **Why** do you think that?
- 11 When washed of their sins and unified by the Holy Spirit, what did they do **with** and **for** each other (v. 41-47)?
- 12 Last Sunday Pastor Doug showed that, because "every spiritual blessing is **in Christ**" (Ephesians 1:3), **if** you have Christ, **then** you have every spiritual blessing, and if you **don't** have Christ, you have **nothing**.
- 13 That being true, what role does evangelism play in bringing peace on earth?
- **With whom** do you have a fractured relationship?
- 14 What should **your** next action be toward them?



## Application-Challenge

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  - Get to know the Holy Spirit better by completing the "Digging Deeper" feature.
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- 1 This always is a good, soft-ball question to start with—but don't underestimate its value for revealing misunderstanding of concepts or strong emotional reactions against biblical doctrines. Take note of responses.
- 2 It's important to realize that a paradox is only an **apparent** contradiction, rather than a **real** one. Careful attention must be paid to details—and not making more of differences than the details require. [**Don't** give an example unless it is necessary, since it takes a long time to sort out these details, but if you need to give an example, here's one: How many angels appeared at Jesus' tomb? Many skeptics have said that the gospel accounts contradict each other, but the contradiction is **only apparent, not real**. Matthew 28:2 says that "an angel" was there, while John 20:12 says that "Mary saw two angels". Solution? One is contained in two. If Matthew's account had said that "only one angel was there", then we would have a genuine contradiction. There were two angels, but Matthew's account only mentions one of them.]
- 3 Don't get bogged-down in trying to unravel the mystery of the Trinity—we're not smart enough! But if you need another passage that shows the close connection between the persons in the Trinity, look at Romans 8:9. The Holy Spirit is called both "the Spirit **of God**" and "the Spirit **of Christ**!" Although the three persons of the Trinity are distinct, since they have the same attributes, the "overlap" is complex! Remember: the complexity and mystery of the Trinity is evidence that it is **not** a man-made doctrine!
- 4 Don't feel threatened by differences of opinion on this. Yes, it **does** matter, but not everyone is equipped to understand complex doctrines. (See 1 Corinthians 2:14 and Hebrews 5:11-14.)
- 5 The key truths delineated by this diagram are that each of the three persons (Father, Son, and Spirit) are equally "God", but the Father is not the Son, the Father is not the Spirit, etc. **Note:** If someone suggests an analogy for the Trinity (eg. "It's like H<sub>2</sub>O—which can be a solid, a liquid, or a gas." or "It's like an egg—which has a yolk, a white, and a shell—but it's all one egg." **don't** make a big deal of it, but **do not** engage in that discussion. Every analogy ends up in heresy. Simply say something like, "Hmmm, yes, I've heard those sorts of illustrations. It's a good bit more complex than that—but we cannot get into all that at the moment." If you, or anyone in your group, wants more info, email Pastor Dan.
- 6 The critical issue is that our unity in Christ is a **theological reality**, even if **experientially** we are in conflict with other believers. For example, Ephesians 4:2-3 command us to humbly and diligently show tolerance for individual differences"—**because** "there is one body".
- 7 The **way** that the Holy Spirit brings peace is by "making diverse people into one new man" (Ephesians 2:11-22).
- 8 With this question, you're only trying to get a pulse for group members' feelings on the issue of unity. Are they hopeful or cynical. The next three questions (9-11) will prove that Christian unity is possible.
- 9 **Fifteen** cultures were present at this event! The diversity was extreme!
- 10 You're just going for opinions here. Help them try to be honest in sharing their thoughts.
- 11 Don't rush through the testimony of their self-sacrificial life together! Three thousand diverse people (v. 41) "continually devoted themselves" (v. 42) to life together. They "had all things in common" (v. 44). Those from Jerusalem (where this was taking place) sold their own properties to help those who were from all across the Roman Empire (who had come with only enough money for a two-week stay, during the Jewish feast of Pentecost) be able to remain longer and learn from the Apostles. This was extraordinary generosity! This **really** happened!
- 12 This "all or nothing" nature to spiritual blessings is due to the fact that Jesus is the only Savior (Acts 4:12)
- 13 Since Jesus is the **only** Savior, and since self-sacrificial love and unity are only possible through Christ, then we **must** share the gospel with others if we wish to foster harmony on earth. See Romans 10:9-15.
- 14 Help group members be concrete and specific in this discussion. Should they write a letter? Should they seek to restore a damaged relationship? Should they pray for boldness to share the gospel? etc.
- 15 Close by pointing out the offer of free biblical counseling as well as the points of "Application-Challenge".