

Sunday School Lesson for the Month of July 2019

The Church: The Community of the Holy Spirit

(John 14:26)

We often look back to the days of Jesus' life on earth with a bit of regret that we did not get to know Him at that time. Sometimes we think our faith would be stronger if we had the opportunity of seeing Jesus for ourselves. However, we are probably mistaken because many of those who saw Jesus did not even believe Him.

On the eve of Jesus' Crucifixion, He told his disciples, ***"The Counselor, 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 to you."*** In other words, Jesus indicated that the Holy Spirit would take His place on earth and would continue all that He had begun.

One choice phrase for understanding the nature of the church is the expression, ***"the church as the fellowship of the Holy Spirit."***

I. The Holy Spirit is Jesus Christ with us!

The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ. In the New Testament, we often read the terms, Holy Spirit, Spirit of God, His Spirit, and Spirit of Christ. These terms are synonymous. We will not go astray if we think of the Holy Spirit as Jesus Christ continually living in us in a spiritual way, just as He lived with the disciples in a natural, physical way.

The Holy Spirit is present with believers just as Jesus was during His life on earth. Although the first disciples saw Jesus and walked with Him, He was removed from them by His Crucifixion. In the Gospel of John, the Holy Spirit is understood as Jesus Christ living with us. The enemies of Christ were able to kill His body, but no one can kill the Holy Spirit. We are assured of His constant presence.

What is the Holy Spirit like? The Holy Spirit is God, and God is revealed in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is like Jesus. If you want to determine whether it is truly the Holy Spirit leading you, ask, "Is this what Jesus would do?" What we know about the Holy Spirit, we have learned through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

So we were not left alone when Jesus ascended back to the Father. Rather, God is always with us in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

II. The Holy Spirit is our Teacher.

A. ***The early church saw Jesus as their teacher.*** He not only taught them the ways of God, He also taught them how Christians should live. His teachings have become the guidelines for the lives of His followers. Jesus' early death did not allow enough time for Him to teach them all they needed to know about important subjects. It is remarkable that Jesus, knowing that He would die young, specifically promised that the Holy Spirit would be our teacher and that He would continue to teach us after Jesus' departure.

B. ***The Holy Spirit is our teacher.*** We can't go astray and think the Holy Spirit teaches us apart from the Bible or the church. The New Testament brings us the teachings of Jesus Christ by inspired writers. The Holy Spirit teaches us partly by helping us to understand the Bible. Sometimes we have people who claim special revelations by the Holy Spirit that are contrary to the teachings of the Bible. But, if the Bible is faithful to Jesus Christ, then the Holy Spirit who continues to teach as Jesus did, will agree with the biblical teachings.

C. ***The Holy Spirit is particularly present in the church.*** Although individual Bible study is important and should not be neglected, we often sense the Holy Spirit's presence most keenly in church. That's why the scripture says, not to forsake our assembling together. The Holy Spirit teaches us while we worship and study in the company of others.

III. The Holy Spirit leads the Church.

A. ***The Book of Acts gives examples.*** Many people think the book of acts should be referred to the "Acts of the Holy Spirit" and not "Acts of the Apostles!" If you've read Acts, then you know that the Holy Spirit is in charge at every important juncture in the early church. The Holy Spirit led at Pentecost and empowered the church as they moved a Jewish foundation to the Gentile world. The Holy Spirit guided and strengthened missionaries in their Evangelistic work.

B. ***The Holy Spirit should lead the church in ministry today.*** The Holy Spirit is the leader. When we overlook that fact then the church is in trouble. We must listen to the Holy Spirit. We must be obedient to the Holy Spirit as we seek to do His will.

IV. The Holy Spirit is the power within the church.

A. ***The Holy Spirit convict individuals of their sin.*** In John 3, we learn that new birth is brought about by the Holy Spirit instrumentality of the word. In other words, when unbelievers hear the gospel being preached, the Holy Spirit drives it into their hearts so they are convicted of their sin and have the desire to become a Christian. That's the work of the Holy Spirit.

B. ***The Holy Spirit empower Christians to witness.*** The only way Christians are able to proclaim the gospel effectively is by the Holy Spirit giving power to their witness.

V. The Church is a "fellowship" of the Holy Spirit.

A. ***Worship depends on the Holy Spirit.*** Unless the Holy Spirit is present, there is no real worship. We are only going through the motions. Everything is in vain without the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The Church is not the church unless the Holy Spirit is moving within it. Without the Holy Spirit, our worship services are empty. Singing and preaching is powerless without the work of the Holy Spirit.

Without the Holy Spirit, churches become religious clubs. All too often we think the church belongs to us and we organize it in order to do what we want to do with it. But, the Holy Spirit makes the church. There is no family of God and there is no body of Christ without the Holy Spirit. ***The church is known as the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.***