

Complete the Picture
Week 1: God, Jesus and...

What happens when you don't have a complete picture? The short answer is that you can get a completely wrong idea. You can see part of a picture and **not know what you are looking at**. You can get **part of the story** and not understand the story at all.

I was watching a Masterpiece Theatre show called **Magpie Murders**. The idea of this series is that a very successful murder mystery writer has died. Maybe it was suicide, maybe it was murder. It ends up being murder. The issue is that he has delivered his last much anticipated book in this series. A lot is riding on this, for the publisher and the editor. When the editor reads it, she finds that there is no concluding chapter. You know, the point when the detective **gathers all of the suspects in a room** and unravels the mystery ending in the answer to the main question, "Who done it?"

The rest of the story is about **trying to find** this missing chapter, or **at the very least figure out who done it in the novel and who done it in reality**.

Without the last chapter of the story, the book is worthless. No one would buy it. It doesn't complete the story. Completing the picture, or completing the story, is vital to getting the right idea. **Having only a part, leaves us vulnerable to misunderstandings, wrong conclusions, and complete disaster**. This could be as harmless as coming in late to a conversation, creating some confusion **versus making life changing decisions without all the facts**.

What about if we have an incomplete picture of God? Could this not be **disastrous for a relationship** with the one who created us and sent Jesus to save us? You can have a part of the story and think that **God is an old grandpa** who forgives you of everything, regardless of what it is because he thinks, "you're a really nice boy." **That leaves us with a God who doesn't care about justice, or the damage sin does to people**. Or we could have a picture of God who says, "**I am good, you are bad, now go try harder to please me**." Both of these are conclusions drawn from an incomplete picture of God.

Here are three symbols that can be used to describe God. Let's see what is **missing** from these pictures.

Diagram of Triangle...This is a symbol for God used down through the years. **What is missing?** It's not a greater than math symbol. **(complete picture)** It is supposed to be a triangle. **One shape with three sides.** Each side is the same as the others.

The triangle is an ancient picture used to describe God. Why?

A stool...this one isn't ancient, but I've used it in the past to describe God. **What is missing?** **(Complete picture)** Obviously the stool needs three legs or it will not be stable, out of balance.

Trinity symbol...Here is another image that has been used to describe who God is. It is **one line with no beginning and no end** that includes **three loops**. You have a **crown for God**, the Father, and a **cross for Jesus**. Sometimes there's a hand sign for The Father and a lamb for Jesus. Now we can see what is missing. **(Complete picture)** **It's the dove.** That is a symbol for what the Bible refers to as The Holy Spirit.

In each of these examples, it is the Holy Spirit that is missing from the complete picture of God. In each case there are three. **The pictures don't make sense** without being completed.

Maybe this will help. ¹⁹ **Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.**
Matthew 28:19

It would be rare for someone to **forget about God, the father, or even Jesus, His Son,** but not The Holy Spirit. God The Father **owns the Old Testament.** He dries up the sea, speaks out of a burning bush, creates a nation and, most of all, speaks the world into existence. **You have Jesus, who totally rules the whole story** when he comes as a baby born of a virgin, lived a perfect sinless life and then was spectacularly murdered and then walks out of a tomb.

You can go to **church in America all your lives,** and not hear a series on The Holy Spirit. And if you did, you might not even believe that this is part of who God is.

This is what **historically Christians have called** The Trinity. **The Trinity means 3 in 1**.

- **God The father**...YAHWEH, Abba, Just Judge, Creator
- **God The Son**...The Lamb, perfect sacrifice once for all, Immanuel God with us, the God-Man
- **God The Holy Spirit**...wind or dove, the presence of the risen Christ

How can something be three and still be one? I can give you some **handles**, but it ultimately is something that is above my understanding. See if these are helpful.

- I can be a father, son, and brother. Each has a different role.
- H₂O is water, ice, and steam
- God in three persons...with three different roles

All of these fall short, because any description of the majesty of God, **using any language or art form**, are too small, but they can be helpful.

Here are some images that might **help you to understand that God is three in one**.

(Slide 14) This is one that we saw earlier. In this picture, God, the three in one, is described with a line, with no beginning or end, that creates three loops. **He is eternal**. Then you have a crown representing God the Father, a cross for Jesus the Son, and a dove as the Holy Spirit. **The three are in perfect unity**.

(Slide 15) In this picture you have a little different description of God as Trinity or three in one. **This shows how each of the three is distinct** from the other, **but all are completely God**. And it looks like one of those **annoying fidget spinners** from a few years back.

(Slide 16) This picture is the **most complicated** but adds a couple of more aspects. It has the idea that they are "not," or rather, are distinct from the others, **but they are also, "in" one another**. The second aspect is that **they glorify each other**. Jesus came to bring glory to His Father and the Spirit comes to bring glory to Jesus. **There is again harmony, no competition**.

The complete picture of God must include the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we leave it off, because there is controversy about the "gifts of the Holy Spirit." Sometimes we leave it off because it seems too touchy feely. Or maybe we leave it off because we think we have enough on our plate with The Father and the son. That's plenty filling by itself.

"After all, the important part that gets me into heaven has to do with the father and the son, so what's the harm in viewing the Holy Spirit as an unnecessary enhancement?"

If the trinity were a college course, the father and the son are required reading, while the Holy Spirit is extra credit. Or we say, "I'll stick with God, because he's the top of the food chain with the ability to "smite" me and "all I need is Jesus."

Let's start where we usually start off, and that is with Jesus promising this mysterious Holy Spirit. This is Jesus speaking to his disciples after his resurrection. ⁴ Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. ⁵ John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." ⁶ So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, "Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?" ⁷ He replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:4-8

By the way, you might like to know that this was Sterling Gatling's favorite verse...he used it every time he preached. And when he read this verse, it somehow sounded like it was coming from God's lips to your heart. I miss Sterling very much.

The Holy Spirit is something they will receive, but they need to wait for this mysterious event to take place in Jerusalem. It is through the Holy Spirit that they will receive the power necessary to bear witness to what they have seen in Jesus spreading this message from Jerusalem across the world.

As an attempt to start filling in the missing parts of the picture, I want to give you a few phrases that fit together in a sentence that describes the Holy Spirit's part of the picture. The rest of this eight-week series will be dedicated to the person of The Holy Spirit, which too often has been a missing person.

The Holy Spirit was sent to us... We have seen that this is promised, but how exactly did it happen? I would encourage you to read the first two chapters of the book of Acts, which shows how this played out. Here's a brief excerpt from chapter 2.

On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. ² Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. ³ Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. ⁴ And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability... Acts 2:1-4

What follows this display of supernatural power is this new Jesus movement growing by 5000 people. That happens because under the influence of this Holy Spirit sent by Jesus who has left earth, Peter preaches the sermon to end all sermons. People come rushing, hearing this noise, and then start hearing the disciples speak in all these different languages. You see, people from all over that part of the world were in Jerusalem for the festival of Passover and Pentecost. They heard these men speaking in different languages about Jesus. Peter grabs the mic and speaks on behalf of the group, telling the crowd that no one is drunk in this crazy scene, but it is what the prophets had promised long ago.

Because God is three in one, this holy Spirit has been around, a part of the full picture of God, since the beginning. The Holy Spirit is from the very beginning.

- **Hovering above in the creation.**
- **The glory of the God in the temple.**
- **Other references to The Spirit, like what Peter quoted from the prophet Isaiah in his sermon.**

One of the most important passages concerning the Holy Spirit outside of Acts is John 14. Here are a couple of the key parts for completing the picture.

¹⁵ "If you love me, obey my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you **another Advocate**, who will never leave you. ¹⁷ He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you. ¹⁸ No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you. **Remember Jesus is going to die** on the cross, rise from the dead and then ascend into heaven to sit on his throne with the father. **"I'm going to leave you in one way, but in another way, I'll always be with you. I'll be even closer because now I won't just be with you but I will be in you."** ¹⁹ Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Since I live, you also will live. ²⁰ When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you... ²⁵ I am telling you these things now while I am still with you. ²⁶ But when the Father sends **the Advocate as my representative**—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you. ²⁷ "I am leaving you with a gift—**peace of mind and heart**. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid. John 14:16-20

The Holy Spirit was sent to us **to be the presence of the risen Christ...**

Jesus leaves and the father sends the holy spirit. You can't have the one in the body anymore. That won't do. **You need the one who is like the wind, free to blow wherever.**

Do you remember the Holy Spirit described as "another advocate". That's because Jesus is the first advocate. **He is the one who is the defense attorney** in the court where The Father sits as the one true holder of justice. Jesus, as our defense attorney, **has to bring a good case.** He doesn't stand before The Father, who is holy and completely just, and brings a weak case. **He isn't making excuses for sin** that must receive just punishment. He doesn't say that **he loves me and will do better next time.** That would be **justice delayed and, as the saying goes, justice delayed is not justice.** Sin and wickedness **deserve death.** Jesus' case is that he has **allowed the just punishment to fall on him; therefore, justice has been served.**

The Holy Spirit is a different kind of advocate. He is the one who is the presence of the first advocate who now whispers in your ear. This is more like a counselor, encourager, resource, not like a defense attorney.

The Holy Spirit was sent to us to be the presence of the risen Christ **taking up residence in his people...**

Where did the presence of God reside in the past? Well, we can start from his heavenly throne. But, as for earth, the Bible describes three steps from heaven to living in his people.

The first step was within the first covenant with Israel as his people. Tabernacle, which was a tent that they used for worship and sacrifice, that was portable during their nomadic years.

The second step was also within the context of Israel being God's special people. The Temple was a permanent residence in Jerusalem, God's favorite city. The Holy of Holies was the central part, where the glory or presence of God lived. It is where heaven met earth.

The third step is where he resides in his new people, those who put their trust in Jesus. This is a new covenant. God's new people, the new Israel is the multinational multi-ethnic people who are called by his name. This is called The Church.

I don't think that we really understand the gravity of that reality that God has a temple and it is me, it is us. The Holy Spirit, which is the presence of the risen Christ, lives in people who are broken, who sin, who fall short, who continually mess things up.

A temple is supposed to be perfect, isn't it? Everything is to the exact liking of the god who lives there. And our God, The God decided before the creation of the world that he would move from a tent, to a palace in the middle of a great city, to people like us from every nation and every ethnicity. This is what he likes.

Is the picture starting to come together for you? This is who our God is. The first was a cheap rental, the second was a starter home in a better

neighborhood. The final step up is the dream house on a lake with a great view.

We are that dream home! We are what he loves the most, that is the one creation that is in his image. That should tell us what we need to know about God and how we should view ourselves.

The Holy Spirit was sent to us to be the presence of the risen Christ, taking up residence in his people...**giving them what they need to be His presence, doing His work!**

What more could you possibly need?

It's kind of like our **cell phones**. With this you have access to more than the **greatest libraries** in the world. You can find that **kid who your daughter is dating** and learn what he is really about. You can find **an address** that you've never been to and you can **translate other languages** into English. You can find a **step-by-step recipe for falafel**.

The phone provides us with a lot of stuff, but much of it we don't really need. We just want. And it can't provide us with all that we need to be the presence of Jesus wherever we go. We call this making the kingdom of God present for others. Only God within me can do that. After all, it's his kingdom, not mine.

Although my phone can help me find or read The Bible, I cannot translate that into doing the work of the great commission to make disciples without the Holy spirit. I can't even see spiritual reality without the holy Spirit.

Steps of Obedience

Invite someone to join you.

Here's how to get ready to do this.

Pray...make a list...get comfortable with how to invite.

"We are starting a series at my church that I think could be really helpful for you. Check out the first one online."

Next week we will have another resource to help you with asking by explaining what Eagle Ridge is all about.

Create space for the Holy Spirit in your life.

What is your max capacity for the Holy Spirit? What if you were able to increase your capacity for the Holy Spirit in your life? What might happen in your life? 1% more when we are talking about the presence of the risen Jesus Christ is a huge difference.

1. **Commit to join us each week of this series.**
2. **Commit to feed on and even memorize** some key verse about The Holy Spirit. Throughout this series **you will get cards like the one you received** as you entered today. On the back there is a place to put **three names** that you think the Holy Spirit may want you to invite. **Inviting is a part of making disciples.** It isn't always to a Sunday worship experience, but it is **inviting someone to meet someone that they either don't know** at all or know about, but really don't know. **Inviting is where we see if this person is a person of peace.** "Join me as I spend time in the presence of someone truly remarkable. I'm going to do this so why don't you come with."

Let's close by reading today's memory verse.

- Acts 1:8
- John 14:25-27
- Psalm 51
- Acts 2:32-33
- Galatians 5:22-25