

Complete the Picture  
Week 3: Are you receptive?

I've heard of God. Yes, he created everything. **He is all powerful and very impressive, but not approachable.** And then there's Jesus, who is his son sent to earth so that we could relate to this God who seems unapproachable. He then, through his death and resurrection, enables those who **accept him to have the promise of eternal bliss in heaven.** There you have it. **That's the story that's a picture of God and it's enough for me.**

What's the problem with this picture? It's incomplete. It leaves out the part of the story after Jesus has risen from the grave and then ascends into heaven. The rest of the story is really about what? Well, it's about what Jesus continues to do in this world. He does that because his new presence is the Holy Spirit. To leave this part of the picture out means you don't really understand what God is doing in this world right now. You only know the path to eternity.

Here's the quick fly over of how the Holy Spirit completes the picture.

Let's say this together, phrase by phrase.

The Holy Spirit was **sent to us...** When Jesus **ascended** into heaven the Father sent the holy spirit. Why? **to be the presence of the risen Christ...** Jesus promised **not to leave them** as orphans but to never forsake them, so his presence is now in spirit form. **taking up residence in his people...** No longer is the presence of God in a tabernacle, **temple** or one nation like Israel. It is in everyone who puts his or her trust in Jesus. **giving them what they need to be His presence, doing His work!** Now God's people can be who they were created to be, **make the Kingdom present** for others and help others learn to follow Jesus.

Let's read it all together. That's the **quick fly over.**

I **bolded one key word** in each phrase that can help you remember it.

The question we are asking today is, "**Are you receptive?**"

I have a friend who once donated a kidney. I donated blood from time to time and that made me very uncomfortable. One time I even sprayed the lady drawing it

from me. That was unfortunate. I've never donated a kidney or anything else. I think I've told them that they can have anything they need once "Bill has left the building." But taking it while I'm here seems extreme.

**Another person's body must be receptive** to that kidney. They try to make a match. There was a person who was receptive to her kidney. The person **must be open to the operation itself** where the kidney is installed. Now that persons' life and health has changed. But they had to be receptive.

**Today we are continuing our series** on completing the picture of God by filling in what typically is missing and that is the holy Spirit. The question for today is, "are you receptive to the Holy Spirit?" If he were to enter into your life, would your life, your body, be a receptive home for him.

**You might have some misunderstandings** about the Holy Spirit and what he does. It will make me say weird stuff like, "God told me to tell you..." Or you just know some people who talk about the Holy Spirit, and they make you uncomfortable because they emphasize things, like people going into a trance in a church meeting, and speaking in words you don't understand.

Or maybe you have **never heard anyone talk about the Holy Spirit**, so you just have no frame of reference.

**Maybe you are not receptive to the Holy Spirit because your life is crowded.** Would there be a lot of rules of what he could do or couldn't do? **Would there be parts of you, like hidden rooms** that he would not be allowed to enter? It's not like you are inviting a **roommate who only uses one of the bathrooms.**

**Being receptive means inviting the presence of King Jesus.** Again, the question is are you receptive to the Holy Spirit?

Today we are going to **begin with Acts 2**, where the Holy Spirit first comes on the scene. Let's begin with verse 32. **The Holy Spirit has just come upon the disciples**, and they began speaking in languages that they didn't know. There was a **roaring wind** that went through the room and above their head there were something like **tongues of fire**. This attracted a crowd quickly with some thinking the disciples were drunk. **Peter, now filled with the presence of Jesus, grabs the mic and begins to explain what is happening.** <sup>32</sup> "God raised Jesus

from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this.<sup>33</sup> Now he is exalted to the place of highest honor in heaven, at God's right hand. And the Father, as he had promised, gave him the **Holy Spirit to pour out upon us**, just as you see and hear today.<sup>34</sup> For David himself never ascended into heaven, yet he said, 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit in the place of honor at my right hand<sup>35</sup> until I humble your enemies, making them a footstool under your feet.'" <sup>36</sup> "So let everyone in Israel **know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!"**

<sup>39</sup> This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God."<sup>40</sup> Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation!"

<sup>41</sup> Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all. Acts 2:32-41

**3000 people were receptive to the Holy Spirit.** They believed the good news about Jesus, **they put their faith in Jesus** and demonstrated that belief by **repenting of their sins.** They **turned away from their own self led life** and invited a king to take charge. Then they **followed him obediently in baptism.**

Peter says that they needed to **save themselves from their crooked generation** by putting their trust in Jesus. That was the way to **save themselves and to have Jesus' Holy Spirit in them.**

**Is it any different in our generation?** It is still crooked or bent and **Jesus, taking up residence in people, is still the answer so that we aren't bent also.**

What am I saying? **Simply, we need the Holy Spirit just as much as they did because our culture wants to bend us to its will.**

But the only thing that really matters is...**Are you receptive?**

**In last week's memory verse, we learned that the Holy Spirit was given as a gift. But what kind of gift is it?** If you weren't here, or this is your first time, we have some **racks in the lobby** with both today's memory verse and last weeks. **Look at the card** and you will see that there are **three numbers** on the back. Those are for you to think of three people who you would like to join you in this journey of completing the picture of God. Maybe that's someone who kind of **fell**

**off the radar** during covid and never came back. We are calling these five verses **Five to Thrive**. Feed on them, **read them daily**, and then they just might become a part of your memory.

Listen to the **words of Jesus** about what kind of gift the Holy Spirit is. <sup>13</sup> **So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.**" Luke 11:13

**Asking for something is one sign of being receptive to that something.** When we know what we are really asking for and then **count the cost**, that means we are receptive. Knowing that we are **asking for a king and new master or leader who doesn't take a back seat** to anyone, that means we are receptive.

**We love control, but this gift that we ask for implies that we don't get to control the situation anymore.** We must follow Jesus now.

Let's look back at **Acts 2**. <sup>37</sup> Peter's words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" <sup>38</sup> Peter replied, "Each of you **must repent of your sins and turn to God**, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. **Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** From those words **what becomes very clear is...Receiving the Holy Spirit begins with repentance.**

Repentance is first!

**It is an event but not a one-time thing.** There will be more times when repentance is needed, and a new infilling will happen. **Repentance is a lifestyle.** When this Holy Spirit **reveals something that we were unaware of**, we must repent and again choose to be **receptive to this message that self-will is now creeping in again.**

**Samaritans had a partial view of God; Peter and John came to complete the picture.**

<sup>14</sup> **When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that the people of Samaria had accepted God's message, they sent Peter and John there.** <sup>15</sup> **As soon as they arrived, they prayed for these new believers to receive the Holy Spirit.** <sup>16</sup> **The Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them, for they had only been baptized in the name of**

the Lord Jesus. <sup>17</sup> Then Peter and John laid their hands upon these believers, and they received the Holy Spirit. There were people who had heard of Jesus and had believed, but they didn't yet have the full picture. Or they were followers of John the Baptist and didn't have the whole picture of Jesus leaving and sending the holy Spirit as his presence in the world.

<sup>18</sup> When Simon saw that the Spirit was given when the apostles laid their hands on people, he offered them money to buy this power. <sup>19</sup> "Let me have this power, too," he exclaimed, "so that when I lay my hands on people, they will receive the Holy Spirit!" He was receptive to the effects of the Holy Spirit, but he wasn't receptive to a king coming in and taking control. Here's Peter's reply. <sup>20</sup> But Peter replied, "May your money be destroyed with you for thinking God's gift can be bought! A gift is not a gift if it is bought. <sup>21</sup> You can have no part in this, for your heart is not right with God. <sup>22</sup> Repent of your wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive your evil thoughts, <sup>23</sup> for I can see that you are full of bitter jealousy and are held captive by sin." Acts 8:14-23

Again, we see repentance as the first step to receiving The Holy Spirit.

Repentance is not just an about face, it is actively emptying something that isn't the Holy Spirit in order to make space for the Holy Spirit. He needs the full capacity. Simon had wickedness, and bitter jealousy that he was filled with. There was no room for the Holy Spirit. He needed to come clean about this.

That brings us to this very often quoted verse. This is our next Five to Thrive verse. <sup>19</sup> Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, <sup>20</sup> for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

The rest of this sermon is based upon repentance. A person sees their sinfulness and takes a step in the other direction toward Jesus trusting him as the only answer. Then it's time to start making space for the Holy Spirit to take up residence.

This should be clear by now, but let's just state the obvious. Receiving means you're his residence.

**We belong to the new owner. He's not renting this as an investment for him. That's what we like, a spirit that rents, so we are still in charge, but can receive some of the benefits of having The Holy Spirit hanging around.**

**I must act as if The Holy Spirit lives in me, permanently. Not just stopping by for a visit and then I can go on with my life how I choose.**

**It's like the VRBO commercials where they guarantee that you will get the whole place, not needing to share it with anyone. The Holy Spirit is the presence of the risen Christ; he is the owner, and he doesn't have roommates. He doesn't couch surf and open the fridge to see that you have written your name on all the food letting him know not to take any.**

**Even when we have rented houses on a trip and they say that we get the whole house to ourselves, there is always a room locked or a closet locked. That's where they keep the owner's stuff for cleaning or whatever. We are renters, not owners.**

**What are some of the things that take up a lot of space...**

- Anger.
- Fear.
- Resentment.
- Grudges.
- Insecurities.
- Hypocrisy or just being fake.
- **That thing that happened to you in the past that has continued to direct your life.**
- A big one is **pride**, that determination to be your own boss or king and build your own kingdom.

**The Holy Spirit won't share space with that stuff. If we empty it, he will immediately begin to clean up the mess. If we want to hide these things, they will continue to make us unreceptive to the Holy Spirit.**

**We allow the Holy Spirit free reign to clean house. And this goes at the pace in which He sees fit.**

**Being filled is a process of being transformed.**



The Bible is full of the language of transformation. Another way the Bible describes this work of the Holy Spirit is **being made new, becoming God's new creation.**

**When we repent, believe, and begin to follow, we are made new.** But we are also **being made new.** It's an event and process. We get caught up in the Holy Spirit **being one or the other. He is both.**

**In the context of this scripture,** Paul is talking about the Jewish people **not being able to hear God's voice** as if there is a veil over their eyes. **Each time they read the words of Moses, there is a veil keeping them from seeing** how this points to Jesus. Since Jesus has been here and is the only way, **the veil is removed, and he has sent The Holy Spirit** as his presence to transform us.

**<sup>17</sup> For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. <sup>18</sup> So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image. 2 Corinthian 3:17-18**

**Being receptive to the Holy Spirit means that we understand that giving up our freedom is the only way to experience real freedom.** Being the boss of me isn't real freedom, it is pressure. **Being a receptive host for the presence of the risen Christ is freedom to become who he created me to be, a shiny surface off of which the glory of God is reflected to the world.** Now isn't that much better than your puny plans?

**Here's the disconnect. We have made the Holy Spirit absent from our original accepting of Jesus.** We have viewed it only as a transaction concerning the **penalty of my sin. Jesus' blood enables me to get into heaven.** We don't view it as a thing where we **repent, and surrender control by inviting the presence of the risen Jesus into our lives to run things.**

And since we tend to **disconnect the Holy Spirit as a part in the beginning, we lop off the whole process of him making us new, transforming us into someone who reflects God's glory.**

**Did you leave out the Holy Spirit when you got saved?** You didn't really receive him as one who needs to run for your whole life? **And did you then ignore his main job which is to transform what he has taken up residence in you?**

If ever a sermon demanded a response, it would be this one. Here are some...**Steps of Obedience.**

1. **Name** what is taking up space?

Give the devil a name. Take authority over it in the name of Jesus. What is it? Is it pride, fear, anger, resentment? Does it have its origin in something that was done to you in the past? Does it have its origin in something you did in your past that you continue to allow to run your life? Whether to you or by you, these events are running and ruining your life because they crowd out the Holy Spirit.

He can handle whatever you are thinking of right now, but you must do your part.

2. **Release** it.

Bring this forward as your physical response, your act of worship and submission to whatever God wants next. Use the card you received when you entered this a.m. If you don't have one you can come forward in a minute and get one. There are pens in the seat back, but also pens up front.

Maybe it's an addiction. Do I think God could heal you of an addiction right here and now? Sure, he did that for my dad. But in most cases, there's a process taken that begins with being honest and brave enough to believe that this first step is heading somewhere. That somewhere is restoration and transformation. This first step is the commitment that I will take a second step and a third step. These could be joining a recovery group or confessing to someone who you know is a recovering addict. We have those kinds of people here.

"Nature abhors a vacuum." Nature tells us that any vacuum will be filled by something. You can't just clean out a room. If you don't fill it with something useful and purposeful, then junk will start to accumulate. That is human nature.

3. **Invite** the Holy Spirit to begin to fill you.

Practice this pattern this week...Name, release, and invite.



As you come forward, **you can simply drop your card off** on the front on the steps. **I will pray over these cards.** Please don't write your name on it unless you want me to know. If so, I will keep that **between you, me, and the Holy Spirit.**

**If you want to pray with someone** and be like those who they laid hands on and they received the Holy Spirit, then you can simply **come to either side of the prayer benches.**

In Midland, **Pastor Julie, and Tammy Naffie** will be ready to pray with you and anoint you. If you are a high school or middle school student, **Robin will be there** to pray with you. **Here in Beaverton, Deb and I** will be ready to pray with you.