

**Complete the Picture**  
**Week #4: Resistant**

**Do you have a complete picture of God?** Incompleteness will lead to **misunderstanding**. Look at the screen and now we will add what is missing. **(Add the dove slide #2)** It's the full picture of God. He is father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The word **Trinity** might be familiar to you. This means three in one.

It just seems that the Holy Spirit is the part of the picture **that consistently gets left out**. Maybe you are **uncomfortable** with what you think the Holy Spirit is about. This could be because someone who talks about the Holy Spirit is **very mystical and sometimes erratic**. You can get your **head around God as father and son**. But the Holy Spirit, which is described in the Bible as **fire or wind**, is **harder to see**.

Or maybe you were in a faith tradition that just **didn't talk about the Holy Spirit**. Their teaching on God was simply **God and creates everything and Jesus saves us from our sins**. **End of story**.

**But the Holy Spirit is vital because He is the presence of the risen Christ**. We've been saying it this way.

- **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.
- **(Where?) 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.
- **(What for?) 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.

This morning, we are going to ask another question. But to help us do that, we need to dive into God's word. Let's read Acts 7:51-60 <sup>51</sup> **"You stubborn people! You are**

heathen at heart and deaf to the truth. Must you forever **resist the Holy Spirit?** That's what your ancestors did, and so do you! <sup>52</sup> Name one prophet your ancestors didn't persecute! They even killed the ones who predicted the coming of the Righteous One—the Messiah whom you betrayed and murdered. <sup>53</sup> You deliberately disobeyed God's law, even though you received it from the hands of angels." <sup>54</sup> The Jewish leaders were infuriated by Stephen's accusation, and they shook their fists at him in rage. <sup>55</sup> But Stephen, **full of the Holy Spirit**, gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God's right hand. <sup>56</sup> And he told them, "Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God's right hand!" <sup>57</sup> Then they put their hands over their ears and began shouting. They rushed at him <sup>58</sup> and dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. His accusers took off their coats and laid them at the feet of a young man named Saul. <sup>59</sup> As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." <sup>60</sup> He fell to his knees, shouting, "Lord, don't charge them with this sin!" And with that, he died. Acts 7:51-60

Last week, we asked the question, "**Are you receptive to the Holy Spirit?**" To be receptive to the Holy Spirit, we must be willing to **repent**. Once we repent, we need to **treat the Holy Spirit as the one who takes up residence in us**. He doesn't have roommates and he doesn't share the fridge. **He's a king. He's the presence of the risen Christ**. We need to **create space** in our lives so that the Holy Spirit can start to transform us.

**In this story, we see a man, Stephen**, who is amazingly receptive to the Holy Spirit. **He can hear his voice even during abuse** that leads to an execution of sorts. He even **repeats the phrase that Jesus spoke on the cross**, proof that it was the Holy Spirit speaking to him, "**don't charge them with this sin.**" It goes without saying that it **isn't human nature** to turn the other cheek, particularly when we are being falsely accused and murdered. **We want justice**; he wanted them to come to know Jesus as their messiah.

But then you have **the people throwing the stones** at an innocent man. They are **Jewish men, the same as Stephen**, raised to know the one true God. They were promised a messiah, Immanuel, God with us, and **they saw all the miraculous things Jesus did** or at very least heard of them, and yet they wanted none of it. **So much so that they didn't just reject the message, they killed the messenger.**

**They were resistant to the Holy Spirit to the same level that Stephen was receptive to him.**

The Bible talks about how to be receptive to the Holy Spirit, **but it also talks about the opposite.** Stated as a question...**Are you resistant to the Holy Spirit?**

**Since you are here, either in person or online, that means that there is at least some receptivity to the Spirit. But some of the signs of resistance can grow in us.** After all, our **flesh**, that part of us that is bent toward self-promotion and self-fulfillment, **putting ourselves on the throne** is always there. **And our culture will always provide many reasons or excuses** to listen to it and pursue what it says as valuable instead of what the spirit wants.

**Resistance can build up unnoticed over time.** This is like when **medicines or vaccines** teach our body to resist or fight against a certain invader from the outside. **This world provides those types of things that create a natural resistance to this outsider, the presence of Jesus.** It fights it like our **white blood cells** fight off things that can hurt us. Here's what I found on the internet. "White blood cells move through blood and tissue throughout your body, looking for foreign invaders (microbes) such as bacteria, viruses, parasites and fungi. When they find them, they launch an immune attack."

**Over time, we can build up a resistance to the Holy Spirit as if he were an invader seeking to do us harm and take away our freedom.**

**It's like being inoculated against the Holy Spirit. We see a friend like an enemy. We see the one who wants to transform us into someone more like Jesus as a dangerous intruder.**

**People often self-medicate so that they don't have to feel** certain things that are painful, that God wants to heal and even use. **That abuse that happened or the hurt of being rejected** doesn't have to be felt or dealt with if chemicals can cover it with a haze. **There is a resistance built up against what can bring healing.**

As I read this next verse, look for the word or words that describe resistance. But they rebelled against him and grieved his Holy Spirit. So he became their enemy and fought against them. Isaiah 63:10

Rebelle d, means they knew what was right and pushed back against God, the Holy Spirit. They grieved the Holy Spirit. That's an interesting way to put it. We will come back to that. But also, the fact they made God their enemy, to the point that he had no choice but to fight against them.

I want to focus here on resistance to the Spirit that comes in the form of grieving him. Let's put it in the form of two options, one is the option to resist, the other is the option to receive and make space.

Don't grieve the Holy Spirit, instead cooperate. The Holy Spirit is a person of the trinity. He is the presence of the risen Christ, taking up residence in his people. Will those people resist his residency?

To grieve means to "cause someone great distress." Yes, we can cause the Holy Spirit great distress. But how? Well, what does the Holy Spirit want to do in us. What have you learned thus far in this series about the Holy Spirit? He has given to us as the presence of the risen Christ to take up residence in us, giving us everything we need to make the kingdom present for others and to be about his work of helping people learn to love and follow him.

If that is what he does, then when we don't let him come into our lives and transform us into someone more like Jesus, then he experiences grief.

Let that settle in. Think about when you felt grief. Grief comes when something is lost. We most often experience it when someone dies. It can also be a hope, plan, or dream dying. Think about how that felt for you.

When our son Quinten died, I've never felt anything so powerfully debilitating. It felt like someone was sitting on my chest. The sense of loss was overpowering.

Now transfer that to how the Holy Spirit feels when we choose to be lost to him. We voluntarily separate ourselves from one who only wants to do good and ultimately is our hope of salvation and eternal life. The Holy Spirit is grieved

because we are heading toward pain and even eternal separation. That is worse than my grief for Quinten. I will get to see him again.

The emotions we have were given to us because we are in God's image. We can look at emotions as weakness. They make me vulnerable, not powerful. That couldn't be more wrong. Those came from God. They help us connect with him.

God knows the plans he has for us and when we resist his transforming presence, he sees the harm we are doing to ourselves and to others and it hurts him.

Doesn't it hurt you when someone you love continues to shoot themselves in the foot, causing themselves trouble and suffering. If that's true for you, then how much more for a God?

Don't grieve the Holy Spirit, instead cooperate. Let him make you into a new person.

But there are other ways we can build up resistance to the Holy Spirit. Again, notice the words that describe resistance. <sup>19</sup> Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. <sup>20</sup> Do not scoff at prophecies, <sup>21</sup> but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good. <sup>22</sup> Stay away from every kind of evil. 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

Let's take one of those resistant words and give it the opposite word for receptivity. Don't stifle the Holy Spirit, instead test.

Let's focus on the word stifle. Other translations use the word "quench."

Stifle= make unable to breath, or to restrain. It's like taking all the oxygen away from the spirit's fire. Taking the fuel away from the spirit.

What is the fuel for the spirit? It is the Bible, being in relationships with other Christ followers who also have the spirit living within them and communing with God in prayer.

Quench is to throw water on the fire of the Holy Spirit. You can starve a fire and it will die, or you can extinguish a fire and it will die. Different paths to the same result.

**The fuel is the same as the means of testing what you are sensing in your spirit is the voice of the Holy Spirit. The Bible, relationships in the body of Christ, and prayer asking God's direction, are the fuel and the way we test what we think the Spirit is saying to us.**

**I have had a thought about something that God might want for 2024. I heard from members of the body of Christ in ER and from the outside. This desire persisted. I kept reading the Bible to see what it said. I started asking God to tell me what I should do.**

**Then I went to The Discipleship Forum in Indianapolis. There were a million reasons not to go. I was tired. I have gone before. There are other people who need to go, not me. I really didn't want to drive to Indiana and then home in a day. Then in two different times by two different speakers, my questions were answered.**

**How do you test something that you think might be the direction or voice of the Holy Spirit? Is it saying what Jesus was saying or doing? In a broader sense, does it align with what the Bible teaches? Does it fit into our fellowship or would it cause disunity? Can it be confirmed by others who know Jesus because they have the holy spirit too. Does it go against how God has designed creation?**

**This is how we test a desire that we have, answering the question, is it from the Holy Spirit?**

**It is not necessarily being resistant to the Holy Spirit that we struggle with sin. The Holy Spirit does not ask you to grovel or berate yourself. Look back and laugh at yourself that you are acting like the old, dead version of yourself, not the one who is new, being made new.**

**Now we dive back into the story of Jesus. Can't go wrong there. Let me warn you. This is one of the stories that has caused many to live in fear or dread when they didn't need to. <sup>22</sup> And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons." <sup>23</sup> So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: "How can Satan drive out Satan? <sup>24</sup> If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. <sup>25</sup> If a house is divided against itself,**

that house cannot stand. <sup>26</sup> And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. <sup>27</sup> In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man's house. <sup>28</sup> Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, <sup>29</sup> but whoever **blasphemes against the Holy Spirit** will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin." <sup>30</sup> He said this because they were saying, "He has an impure spirit."  
<sup>31</sup> Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. <sup>32</sup> A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you." <sup>33</sup> "Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked. <sup>34</sup> Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!" <sup>35</sup> *Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.*" Mark 3:22-35

**Are you resistant to the Holy Spirit?** Don't grieve the Holy Spirit, instead cooperate... Don't stifle the Holy Spirit, instead test...and **Don't cut yourself off from The Holy Spirit, instead submit.**

**There was a guy I knew years ago.** He was led to Christ as a young adult and immediately began going to church with his new wife. They made friends and got involved. **But when it came to the Bible, he never read it.** The only contact he had was if **someone else was teaching** or preaching from it. **The rest of the church was mainly about having friends his age.** The pastor even tried to meet with him, but he just wouldn't read the Bible or put any effort into it growing up. **He had his children dedicated** in the church. **But, anything like prayer, reading the Bible, studying it, journaling, devotionals, or quiet time, was never done.** **That is how we cut off the oxygen** or pour water on the spirit in our lives.

**The end of the story was that this man stopped going to church** for one reason or the other. **It didn't take much** and never, as far as I know, went back. **None of his kids were receiving any training in following Jesus** or even who God is. **I assume that they were taken to lessons and practices for sports, music, etc.** **Time and effort were put out, and resources for helping his kids academically or otherwise were never spared.**

**This man cut himself off from the Holy Spirit** eventually and what began with much promise faded and died. **He didn't want to submit to making room for the holy spirit and, eventually, other things squeezed Jesus out of his life completely.**

**The opposite of making space is actively squeezing out the Holy Spirit until he isn't there anymore. When an employer wants someone to quit, they just start cutting their hours. They squeeze them out.**

Here's a quote from commentator David Garland, about this controversial story. "People need to learn that rejecting Jesus out of ignorance is one thing, but attacking the power by which he works is something far more serious. If one is weak, one can be encouraged. If one is ignorant, one can be informed. If one is willfully blind and deaf and rejects help, what can be done? One has cut oneself off from what might lead to repentance." *The NIV Application Commentary (Mark)*, David E. Garland, 136

**After cutting ourselves off from the Holy Spirit, we can so easily and seamlessly with no fanfare. become someone who is fighting against the Holy Spirit.**

**In 35 years of ministry in three churches, not to mention before it became my job, I've seen cases of people gradually cutting themselves off from the spirit and then, without knowing, they became an enemy of what God wanted to do. They fought against the things God wanted to do.**

One such person was a guy who first started, very promisingly, as a young man and then as a husband. At some point, things that had happened to him in his past and things that were happening to him presently, started to produce bitterness and negativity. He became very negative about the church, the one he attended, but also the church in general. When he came, he never smiled and kept his arms crossed glaring at others. He kept himself to himself, never interacting with others. As with all bitterness, it spread through the family. Now when the church wanted to do something for his family, he actively fought against it. It got to the point where the kids simply gave up participating, because it was made so difficult.

**This man has no idea he's fighting against God.**

**This is the crux of what it means to blaspheme the Holy Spirit. It's not some loophole where a person can accept Jesus, follow him, and then in a moment of weakness, do something against what the Spirit wants and, bam, they are**



condemned to hell. I've known people who worry they've done this and maybe not known, and there's no way out of it. The truth is that there isn't anything that Jesus' death can't pay for, or his grace can't touch.

The sin against the Holy Spirit, or blaspheming the Holy Spirit, is when you separate yourself off and say no so consistently, that you no longer hear the whisper, the still small voice. Then you begin to fight against the Holy Spirit without being conscious of it. This man made it almost impossible for his kids to come to know, love, and follow Jesus. **But nothing is impossible for God!**

In all these resisting responses, we take away our own ability to hear the voice of Jesus. If we can't hear it, then that voice that tells us what we need, but don't really want because it is uncomfortable, is gone. Then we hear what we want to hear.

Let's review. Don't grieve the Holy Spirit; instead cooperate... Don't stifle the Holy Spirit; instead test... Don't cut yourself off from The Holy Spirit; instead submit.

Now let's do something about this. Let's take the first...**Steps of Obedience.**

**Let the Spirit breathe!** How do we begin to do that? It's not complicated. It's not figuring out one of the dreadful math story problems back in school. God lays it out for us. He's not trying to get you to crack the code or unearth some new techniques. It's what he has always done. **Easy to see, but it takes some effort.**

**Read the Bible...**There's no wrong way. And particularly no wrong way to start. Read the book of Mark continually asking, "what is the spirit trying to say to me, what do I need to do to be obedient". If you don't have a bible, I'll give you one. But if you have a phone, then you have access to the Bible. You read the words and even listen to them.

**Find a relational environment...**Come out of the anonymity of sitting at home and watching a service or coming here in a large room and enter a smaller more relational environment. We call these **bridge groups**. They meet at different times and places during the week. There's even one that meets here on Sundays

before the service. Look on the back of your outline and there is a list of them. **If you are a bridge group leader, stand up.**

Be quiet and listen...I practice this when driving to Beaverton and when I am in my kayak.

**We are going to practice that last one together.** Take whatever **posture** that helps you to be open to God. **I'm going to say a phrase** and then I want you to **repeat it** with me and then there will be silence until we start singing. **"Speak Holy Spirit I am listening."**