

**God the Holy Spirit<sup>i</sup>**  
**John 7:37-39; 14:25-27**  
**Week 4**

**Opening**

Ask if anyone would like to open in prayer. They can pray on their own or use the prayer printed below. It also might be a good idea to reach out to a group member prior to your meeting and ask them ahead of time if they'd be willing to open in prayer. That's a great way to encourage participation without putting anyone on the spot.

*God of ages, you have called us to this place at this time with these people to look more closely at ancient words of faith. As we encounter this creed, send your Holy Spirit to guide our discussions. Give us a humble eagerness and imaginative thoughtfulness that our eyes might be opened anew to the power of the faith we profess. We pray in the name of the One whose passion and resurrection we anticipate this Lenten season, Jesus the Christ. Amen.*

Depending on time constraints you may want to take a bit of extra time to check in with folks and see how they're doing. You could also wait and do this at the end of the session before closing in prayer.

It may be a good practice to recite the Creed together each week as we are taking a closer look at each line. This week, we'll discuss the line **"I believe in the Holy Ghost"**

*I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.*

**Check-in questions**

When you hear the term "Holy Spirit," what immediately comes to mind? It could be an image, a scripture or a story from your life.

## God the Holy Spirit

With the phrase “I believe in the Holy Ghost”, the trinitarian structure of the Apostles’ Creed is now completed (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost). In the two languages of the Bible, Hebrew and Greek, the words for *wind*, *breath*, and *spirit* are the same. Two ideas help us gain insight into the vitality of the biblical understanding of the Spirit of God. First, the spirit brings life. Just as God brought Adam to life by breathing into him, so God is able to bring individuals and his church to life through his Spirit today. Second, the Spirit brings power. The Spirit of God is like the wind – an unseen force that acts upon things and people. The Spirit can be thought of as God in action.

Three key components of the work of the Spirit

- *The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin.* Jesus promised his disciples the continued presence and power of the Spirit after he had left them. The Spirit would convict the world of its guilt and sin and convince them of the reality of judgment (John 16:7-11).
- *The Holy Spirit is a pledge of our salvation* (2 Corinthians 1:22). The basic meaning of *pledge* is “down payment” or “token of commitment.” God places his Spirit within our hearts as a down payment: it demonstrates that we are his and promises that there is more to come.
- *The Holy Spirit is our Comforter.* As Jesus prepared to leave his disciples, he promised to send them a Comforter (John 14:25-26). The Greek word *parakletos* is usually translated as “comforter”, “advocate”, or “counselor”. The Greek word for *comfort* can also bear the meaning “urge on” or “encourage to do greater things.” The Spirit prods us, encouraging and empowering us to do things we otherwise would not and could not do.<sup>1</sup>

There has been a good deal of confusion about the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Some see the Spirit as some sort of vague force that inspires people to certain heights of artistic expression or particular giftedness. Some in the church see the Spirit as the dispenser of spectacular gifts.

The first thing that the Apostles’ Creed affirms is that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. The structure of the Creed shows that the church is confessing the divinity of the Holy Spirit. The divinity of the Holy Spirit is evident from the divine attributes that he shares with the Father and the Son.

First, the Holy Spirit is eternal. Hebrews 9:14 says that Christ “through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God.”

Second, the Holy Spirit is everywhere present. Psalm 139:7 says, “Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?”

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<sup>1</sup> McGrath, Allister. *Life Guide Bible Studies: Apostles’ Creed.* Intervarsity Press, 2016

Third, the Holy Spirit knows all things. This is stated in 1 Corinthians 2:10: “For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.”

Fourth, the Holy Spirit is all-powerful. In Luke 1:35, the angel tells Mary, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.”

Fifth, the Spirit is holy. Romans 1:4 says that Christ “was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.”

Most importantly, the Holy Spirit has a key role in the redemption of God’s people. It is the Spirit who brings life.

The Holy Spirit also brings about holiness or sanctification in the lives of God’s people. The Spirit is actively purifying us and making us more like Christ.

Much confusion has been caused by people focusing on the more spectacular gifts of the Holy Spirit that were given to the early church to confirm the apostle’s ministry. Some continue to seek after these, but Paul stresses that all gifts of the Spirit are given for the common good, not to create spiritual superstars.

Finally, we must never forget that the gospel is to be preached in the power of the Spirit. It is not by our strength or our programs that the church will be built, but only through the power of the Spirit of God.<sup>2</sup>

### **John 7:37-39**

John 7:37-39 is one of the central passages in John’s doctrine of the Spirit. It touches on the grand issues that determine what we believe about the Spirit. John’s purpose in writing his gospel was to encourage people (John 20:31) to believe in Jesus and to receive eternal life. His comments on the Spirit fit with this overall purpose.

Jesus issues an invitation to the thirsty. He invites them to come and drink. The result is that those who seek eternal life are invited to believe in Jesus and to receive what He offers.

The invitation of Jesus applied immediately. In some sense the Spirit worked in the lives of those who believed. However, after the glorification of Jesus, His work would be much greater. The Spirit works powerfully in His life-giving role.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://faculty.wts.edu/posts/the-apostles-creed-part-3-i-believe-in-the-holy-spirit/>

## **The Setting**

As verse 37a indicates, the setting for these verses was the Feast of Tabernacles which was called the great feast. This feast took place about six months after the Passover.

Many commentators believe that a daily libation in the Temple lies in the background of what Jesus says. On this day, led by a priest, the whole people, after the sacrifice, went down from the temple to the fountain of Siloam; the priest filled at this fountain, already celebrated by the prophets, a golden pitcher, and carried it through the streets amid joyful shouts of the multitude, and with the sound of cymbals and trumpets.

On the return to the temple, the priest went up to the altar of burnt offering; the people cried out to him: 'Lift up thy hand!' and he made the libation, turning the golden pitcher to the West, and to the East a cup filled with wine from two silver vases pierced with holes.

The ceremony commemorated a great miracle in the desert. When they were camped at Rephidim and there was no water to drink. God said to Moses (Exodus 17:6), "'Behold I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.'" The people quenched their thirst from the water that poured forth from the rock. Thus, the miracle lies in the background of the ceremony.

Jesus no doubt had in mind the miracle in the wilderness, the ceremony in the Feast of Tabernacles, and the pronouncements of the prophets when He spoke. Certainly, His comments fit very well with the setting of the Feast.

## **Christ's Invitation**

After giving the setting (verse 37a), John cites the invitation Jesus made to His audience. He addressed those who may be spiritually thirsty and issued an invitation (compare John 4:10).

In John's writings, God, Jesus, the Word, and the Spirit are all involved in giving life to the believer. Jesus offered living water (John 4:10), to the woman of Samaria. This gift would become (John 10:14) "a well of living water springing up to eternal life." In verse 37 John does not specifically mention the Spirit, but even before the glorification of Jesus, the Spirit was at work. Thus, the gift of water is, or at least includes, the Spirit.

With regard to the Spirit, we have within us (John 4:14) a “well of water springing up to eternal life.” This is the Spirit giving life. If He continually gives life, it is reasonable for us to say that we continually receive life. The giver is inseparable from the gift. Thus we continually receive Him as well. We can say the same of the “rivers of living water” flowing out of our innermost being. We continue to receive the Spirit and share Him with others.<sup>3</sup>

## **John 14:25-27**

Jesus and the disciples were in the upper room after the Last Supper. Although Judas had walked daily with Jesus, he now had gone to betray his Lord. While He was abiding with them, Jesus had taught them many things. Soon Jesus would not be physically present with the disciples. Therefore, He comforted them with the announcement that the Father would send another Helper. This Helper, who is the Holy Spirit, would be sent in the name of Jesus to teach the disciples.

Jesus identifies the Helper as the Holy Spirit and tells us what He will do. The disciples, no doubt, drew much comfort from these words. They would not be left alone, but would have an advocate with them.

Jesus says that the Father will send the Holy Spirit in His name. Given this, the disciples can fully trust the Spirit. They can rely in all circumstances on the Spirit to lead, guide, and teach them.

### **The Spirit’s Mission**

The mission of the Spirit, as presented in verse 26, is twofold. He will teach you all things and He will bring to remembrance all that Christ said. The first clause stresses the comprehensiveness of what the Spirit will teach. The second clause puts the emphasis on what Jesus already said.

Truth is at the heart of all the things that the Spirit will teach. Previously, Jesus said (John 14:6), “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.”

### **Conclusion**

Although the earthly presence of Jesus will be taken from the disciples, they will have another Helper who is the Holy Spirit. This presence of the Spirit assures the progress of

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<sup>3</sup> <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/john/7/37-39>

Christ's mission and the integrity of the message. Moreover, the disciples can take great comfort from the presence of the Spirit. They will not be left alone, but will have the powerful presence of the Spirit with them all the time.<sup>4</sup>

## **Read John 7:37-39; 14:25-27**

\*Make it a point over the course of this series to read from a few different translations. Encourage those who may be reading from a different translation to share any differences they see.

### **Initial Reactions**

1. What from these passages confuses, inspires, or resonates with you? What questions or curiosities do you have about this passage?
2. What does this story tell us about God? What does this story tell us about humanity?
3. Were there any images, stories or insights that stuck out to you from Sunday's sermon?

### **John 7 Questions**

4. What soul thirsts do you know of people around you? Do you have any?
5. What are the two things Jesus tells people to do in order to quench their spiritual thirsts?
6. Is coming to Jesus and coming to church the same? Why or why not? What then does 'come to Me' mean?

### **John 14 Questions**

7. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives." What do you think Jesus means? Where in your life do you need more peace?
8. Jesus said, "Do not let your hearts become troubled, and do not let them be afraid." How are these words speaking to you today?

### **So What Questions**

9. The 15th, 16th and 17th century English translators used "ghost" to translate the Latin "spiritus," which in turn was a translation of the Greek "pneuma" (like catching *pneumonia*). *Ghost* derives from the Old English word *gast* which refers to personal immaterial being – a soul, an angel, or even a demon. Today, "ghost" conjures up images of haunted houses. It is a shame that this is the case. Is it, however, a reason to abandon the term "Holy Ghost"? The term *ghost* reveals a personal agent. You can know Him and talk to Him. And yes, He dwells in you. We can have a personal relationship with Him. *Spirit* is also good; however, it is more ambiguous in English

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<sup>4</sup> <https://ministry.journeyonline.org/lessons/john-1425-26/?series=692>

– especially in our current culture Where “being spiritual” is so popular.<sup>5</sup> **Do you have a preference as to which term to use – *ghost* or *spirit*? Why?**

10. The Holy Spirit is also a comforting presence as Christ’s people experience trials. In John 16:1–15, Jesus warns his disciples that they should expect persecution, but as they face it, they will not be on their own. Jesus will send the Holy Spirit to dwell in the hearts of his disciples. The Spirit will also convict the world of its sin. This gives hope to those who are being persecuted that their persecutors may recognize their sin and turn to God in repentance and faith. Above all, the Spirit will guide Jesus’ followers into all truth. **How have you experienced the Holy Spirit’s comfort and guidance in times of difficulty?**

11. Read aloud the final paragraph of the Apostles’ Creed:  
*We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.*

**How does the Holy Spirit relate to the other elements in the final paragraph?**

12. How have you experienced the Holy Spirit active in your church fellowship?

13. How do you see the Holy Spirit active in your own life?

### **Heidelberg Catechism Question**

Each week, a question from the Heidelberg Catechism will be included with this study guide. The hope is that COB folks would take time to reflect on this question during the week as it gives more framework for the Creed as we study together.

*Question 53.*

*What do you believe concerning “the Holy Spirit”?*

*Answer:*

*First, that the Spirit, with the Father and the Son, is eternal God.1 Second, that the Spirit is given also to me, so that, through true faith, he makes me share in Christ and all his benefits, comforts me, and will remain with me forever.*

### **Closing**

Check in if you haven’t already done so and ask for any prayer requests. Encourage group members to write down these requests and follow up as necessary. Close with prayer.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://taylormarshall.com/2012/05/should-we-say-holy-ghost-or-holy-spirit.html>

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<sup>1</sup> McGrath, Allister. *Life Guide Bible Studies: Apostles' Creed*. Intersity Press, 2016.