What does the Holy Spirit do? His works are ineffable in majesty, and innumerable in quantity. How can we even ponder what extends beyond the ages? What did He do before creation began? How great are the graces He showered on creation? What power will He wield in the age to come? He existed; He pre-existed; He co-existed with the Father and the Son before the ages. Even if you could imagine anything beyond the ages, you will discover that the Spirit is even further beyond.

~ St. Basil the Great ~

Why address the theology of the Holy Spirit in this chapter? Isn’t it more important to teach and stress the more important aspects of life…like what you do and how you live? Does it really matter what you think or believe about something? These are legitimate questions.

Theology always pushes us in a particular direction. The knowledge of God is not neutral, by its very nature it demands something of us. Every thought and belief in our minds leads us to some sort of action. Without action and fruit, all the theology in the world has little meaning.

James 2:17-18
17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. 18 But someone may well say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”
Theology is still absolutely necessary and important.

**Philippians 1:9**
And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real **knowledge** and all discernment…

**Colossians 1:9**
For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the **knowledge** of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding…

**Colossians 1:10**
so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the **knowledge** of God;

**2 Peter 3:18**
but grow in the grace and **knowledge** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

**What you believe determines how you act.** So, while good theology at its best can lead us to live godly lives, bad theology will always point us in the wrong direction. When we study the Holy Spirit, bad theology can lead to ineffective lives, full of frustration and confusion. Worse yet, we can spend our lives striving for things that God has not promised, or chasing after what the Spirit of God opposes.

**So in this lesson** we will seek to ground our understanding of the Holy Spirit by looking at some basic statements about who He is and what He does.

**In everyone’s efforts to study the Bible,** we can come across volumes of material written about the Holy Spirit, by scholars far more advanced and intelligent than we are. We may have all read many brilliant articles that expressed opposing views about the Spirit, and it was very hard to decide who we believed was right.

**While many of the debates** and conversations that take place are nonessential, and don’t need to be resolved for us to live a faithful life, many theological issues are not this way. Some theological issues are absolutely vital to our faith.
These are the ones where what we believe determines how we act.

When it comes to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, let’s not get caught up in abstract or vague distinctions. Let’s focus on the theological issues that shape our faith and behavior.

**Explaining God?**

When you truly start to think about it, how ludicrous is it for anyone to presume to say they are going to explain the Holy Spirit?

**The Bible says** we cannot fully understand God, and none of us are the exception to that rule. There are things about God that are mysterious and secret, things we will never understand about Him.

**But**, there are also plenty of things revealed about God and those belong to us. *Deuteronomy 29:29…*

29 *The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.*

**In this lesson** we will talk about some of the things that have been revealed about the Holy Spirit. We will talk about what He does in our lives and in the world and what He is like. Please realize this will not be an exhaustive study of the Holy Spirit. We will not cover every last verse of the Bible that references the Spirit because even if we did, the Spirit is God, therefore infinite, and cannot be fully known by humans in this life.

**We know even** as we seek to understand the Spirit more, He is so much more and bigger than we will ever be able to grasp. This is not our cue to give up and stop seeking Him, but to not limit Him only to what you can know or understand about Him.

**The point is** not to completely understand God, but to worship Him…in spirit and in truth… *John 4:24.*

Let’s allow the very fact that we cannot fully know Him lead us to find Him even more worthy of praise and honor, for His infiniteness and grandeur.

**As we approach this conversation,** we must never forget that we are treading on holy ground. The Holy Spirit brought creation to life and continues to sustain it.
They call Him “Trinity”.

We have all heard the nature of the trinity described as Father, Son & Holy Ghost. To demonstrate this, we have used the example of the three parts of an egg. The shell; the whites; and the yolk. Three parts, all one egg.

**Another example** is a three leaf clover. Three little leaves, yet all are part of the one clover stalk. Another popular comparison is water. Ice, liquid and steam are all H$_2$O.

**While these comparisons** are useful to a point, eventually the comparison fails. God is not like an egg, a three-leaf clover or water. He is incomprehensible, incomparable, and unlike anything in creation we can discover or imagine.

**He is outside** our realm of existence and thus, outside our ability to categorize Him. While analogies allow us to understand and grasp certain aspects of Him, let’s not assume that they in any way completely sum up His nature.

In the very familiar Christmas verse… *Isaiah 9:6*;

*6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.*

**We see the Son** referred to as the “Counselor” and the “Father”. This passage, along with about 500 others throughout the Bible imply the nature of God as Trinity, and serves to keep us from oversimplifying a divine mystery. (The word “Trinity” never occurs in the Bible, but from the Apostles to the early church fathers, to us…we come to the conclusion of the Trinity simply because we are faithful to the Bible text, which is God’s Word. The word “Trinity” is merely a precise doctrinal word that defines and conveys the Biblical revelation that is so overwhelmingly found in Scripture.)

It cannot easily be broken down into three main points that just make sense, but it works nonetheless…and it is beautiful.

**The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are One.** When digging deeper into the basic truths of the Holy Spirit, we could begin as far back as Genesis 1:2 where the Spirit is present and active in creation, and then trace His actions throughout the Old Testament.
For the purposes of this study, we will begin our overview in the Book of Acts, when the Spirit promised by Jesus would descend and empower the disciples to lay the foundations of His church. Jesus had already breathed the Holy Spirit into His disciples… John 20:19-22.

19 So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” 20 And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21 So Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” 22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.

Wait for it...or Him?
The first two verses in Acts Chapter 2 say they were all “together in one place” and that all of a sudden, a sound came from heaven that was like a “mighty rushing wind.” The text tells us it “filled the entire house where they were sitting.”

Take a moment to imagine this scene...(eyes closed)

You have spent three years following Jesus. You have dedicated your life to Him...you see Him ascend to Heaven. You saw it with your own eyes!

You and the people around you, who have become closer than family by now, are gathered in a house in Jerusalem just........waiting. Waiting? Why? Because you know something is coming. You know because Jesus told you it was. And Jesus told you to wait.

But what or who are you waiting for you aren’t really sure. What do you think they were feeling and experiencing here?

Maybe you get a little anxious and antsy. Tired of worrying and wondering what is coming, perhaps doubtful anything will come at all? How much longer before something happens?

Suddenly, a sound fills the entire house! Tongues of fire appear and come to rest on each person present. Then it happens…Vs. 4 reads: “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.”
While we read that Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit into His disciples in John 20...like the house they were in, they had to wait for the right time when, like the house they all were in, the Spirit welled up inside them and they felt what it was like for the first time, to feel His power and presence.

**SOMETHING CHANGED...**

Weren’t these the same people who were dedicated to following Jesus no matter what, but then scattered as soon as Jesus was arrested? They were huddled in someone’s house, confused and fearful about what to do or where to go next now that their master and Lord had ascended to Heaven.

Yet when the Holy Spirit descended on them, something radical occurred.

**From this point on,** the disciples were never the same. We begin to read about supernatural acts of power done by perfectly plain and normal people. We read of Stephen, the first martyr of the church; stoned to death under Saul’s (the Apostle Paul) supervision by the way. Peter is changed and is now fearless. He preaches an impromptu sermon to the same people he was so scared of he denied knowing Jesus three times. A sermon so powerful that “cuts to the hearts” of those listening, which prompts them to ask, “what should we do?” 3000 people get saved at that session in a sermon I like to call... “The Jesus You Crucified”. vs. 36 Paul formerly Saul of Tarsus, goes from killing Christians to making converts and writing at least one third of the New Testament.

**No longer lost,** timid or confused; they were bold and inspired and began to declare and live the Gospel of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. Imagine what this change might feel like in our lives?

**Should we debate when?**

What would be the purpose in debating when the Holy Spirit becomes a part of someone’s life? What would it matter if it happened...

? When you first prayed to God as a little kid?

? When you first heard that evangelist speak and he literally scared hell out of you?

? When you first had the thoughts, or actually said the words of the sinner’s prayer?

? When you got baptized?

? When you saw some physical manifestation of the Spirit in your life?

? When you finally surrendered yourself fully and completely to Jesus?
Bruce Lee Theology?

In the classic martial arts movie, *Enter the Dragon*, Bruce Lee is teaching a young disciple the importance of putting your focus on the right thing. He says… “Focus is like a finger pointing to the moon…don’t focus on the finger or you will miss all that heavenly glory.” Saints, don’t we spend enough time pointing fingers at others within and without the church? We are so focused on the finger, we neglect or ignore the issues that truly matter.

We all easily fall into the trap of fixating on these questions and miss the heart of Peter’s message. We have lost the awareness of the simplicity and greatness of our faith. While we are to dig in, discuss and even debate the finer points of Scripture, this should not replace the overarching principle that the Holy Spirit is present, and our desire to obey the Scriptures to the best of our ability.

Our knowledge of the bible varies in degrees from person to person based on your time as a believer and the efforts you put into your studies. But what about our baseline level of faith in God and the work of the Spirit in our lives?

What is your response to the Bible? Must we run through every hypothetical situation, and answer every theological question first? Or is it clear that there was a time or now is, that we need to repent, be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit? Can we move forward with the assumption that everyone here has already done this?

When will we simply respond to what we already know and believe about the Holy Spirit, and then work through our questions from there?

Holy Spirit 101

Let’s shift into some basic, and practical bible truths about who the Spirit is and what He does in our lives. First…

The Holy Spirit is a Person.

Not a nebulous, abstract, indistinct force, power or “thing.” We often, perhaps out of force of habit, hear the Spirit referred to as an “it.”
Much like the “force” referred to in the Star Wars movie, the Spirit is thought of as a “power boost” “energy drink” or electric current we can control or use.

While this distinction may be subtle or trivial, it is actually a very serious misunderstanding of the Spirit and His role in our lives.

John 14:17 tells us…¹⁷ that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

This calls for a relationship with the Spirit, as opposed to the notion that we can keep the Spirit at a distance, and then simply “tap” and “harness” the power to accomplish our own purposes. The Holy Spirit is a person who has personal connections and relationships not only with believers, as we have seen, but also with the Father and the Son. Acts 13:1–4…

1 Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ³ Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

Two…

He is not a lesser, separate or different being than God the Father, and God the Son. The words Spirit and God are used interchangeably in the New Testament. In Acts 5:3–4 Peter challenges Ananias and says… “But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”

This is a key principle to remember… when we forget the Spirit, we really are forgetting God.
We read in the Gospel of John about Jesus’ promise to His disciples that the Spirit will be with them forever. (John 14:16)

In Hebrews we read that it was through “the Eternal Spirit” that Jesus offered Himself unblemished before God. (Hebrews 9:14)

The Spirit is not just a flighty, whimsical spirit who comes and goes like the wind. He is an eternal being. The Spirit is also described as Holy. Sometimes we call the Holy Spirit “holy” so many times we begin to lose sight of a truly amazing principle…

Because the Spirit is Holy, and He dwells in us, our bodies and lives become the “sanctuary” and “commentary” from God’s perspective. Drink this in for a moment. All too often we ignore or deny the fact that God sees us as vessels of His Holy Spirit. Many of us find it way too difficult to believe God the Holy Spirit actually makes His residence inside us. Yet the Scripture tells us in 1 Corinthians 6:19... Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

How often have we truly read, understood and accepted the truth conveyed in this simple passage? Maybe we have read it so many times we have been numbed to this concept? Maybe you know your life is way too distorted, dark, dirty and damaged to be the home of the Holy Spirit? Maybe you feel you have to fix it before you allow Him to move in? Problem is, you can’t. Only God can. Why won’t we let Him? Jeremiah 17:14... Heal me, O Lord, and I will be healed; Save me and I will be saved, For You are my praise.

If you have come to salvation in Christ…the Holy Spirit dwells inside you regardless of your entire life history and background. Isn’t it time we accept, trust and embrace this concept and live accordingly?

Your body is precisely where God has chosen to His Spirit to dwell.
Fourth…

the Holy Spirit has His own mind and prays for us.

Romans 8:26-27  *In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groaning too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*

What does this mean? Do you find the thought of the Holy Spirit praying for you according to God’s will a comforting thought?

*I find myself asking*…If the Spirit of God is continuously interceding and praying for us, why do we keep failing?

(from my perspective.) We have established that many times we cry out to God for what we want or need for ourselves, not what God has truly promised us in the Scriptures. The key to understanding this passage is in the text…He does pray and intercede for us…but…according to the will of God, vs. 27 *If you are pursuing God’s will for your life wholeheartedly and without restrictions, you may stumble and fall but you will not fail.*

Fifth…

the Holy Spirit has emotions.

Many of us have read and heard Bible teachings concerning the “grieving” of the Holy Spirit.  *Isaiah 63:10…*

*But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them.*

*Ephesians 4:30*

*Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*

Doesn’t it sound like a bit of an exaggeration?  It seems almost blasphemous, perhaps even far too preposterous that we would have the ability to “grieve” God?
Who are we to have such power over the Holy Spirit? It doesn’t seem right. In fact, it seems wrong to say that God has feelings and would allow Himself to be affected negatively by humans. Does it seem like it belittles God?

Feelings are for sissies?.

In our culture, having feelings or emotions is equated with weakness. God created us with feelings. Sure, like anything else they get misused and abused. But the intent and purpose of feelings came from God.

Since God created emotions, why is it so hard for us to believe He Himself has them? The Spirit is always grieved when there is a breach in relationship, whether it be with God or other people. When we are divided, unloving, hateful, jealous, backbiting and petty we grieve the Holy Spirit. To grieve the Holy Spirit is to grieve God.

As the Author of emotions, does it make sense to say God knows the appropriate emotional response to everything, and grieves more truly and deeply than we can understand or perhaps give Him credit for?

What should our “appropriate response be? Does this bother us? When is the last time we were sincerely saddened because our sin caused pain and grief to God the Holy Spirit?

Would our stubbornness, rebellion and unbelief, manifested in fights, divorces, splits in churches and relationships, be lessened if we truly cared about the Holy Spirit’s feelings?

Perhaps through much prayer and obedience, and with the help of our fellow saints in Christ, we can one day actively work to resolve any conflicts we may have with other anyone else.

Romans 12:18  If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

Sixth…
In 1 Corinthians 12:11 we read that the gifts of the Spirit are “empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each individually as He wills. This is an important reminder of who is in control. Not you, not me, and certainly not any “spiritual gifts” survey and tests.

Just like we do not get to pick and choose what gifts we are given, we also do not get to choose what God intends for us or for the church. The Spirit has a plan for each and every of us. His relationship is also completely unique and different from anyone else’s in the Body of Christ. Why do we keep trying to force everyone into the same mold? As hard as we try, God will not be reduced to a formula, routine or program. He will not be boxed up and restricted by anything we can come up with.

Yet we try to apply a “cookie cutter” formula for all saints. Want spiritual growth and maturity? Read this book, follow that plan; go to the next seminar…etc, etc.

God also has a plan for His church, including ours…and then worldwide.

What’s Your Plan, Stan

Most, if not all of us have our own plans for our lives, for our churches and maybe even for the church as a whole. We like a sprinkle of God here and there to smooth things out and power us through any and all rough spots. How is that going for you?

If we truly want to experience the power and presence of the Spirit, we all desperately need to pray, as Jesus did, “Not my will but Thy will be done.

Seventh…

the Holy Spirit is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient.

In English this translates to…the Holy Spirit is all-powerful, Zechariah 4:6...

6 Then he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts.

He is present everywhere at once…Psalm 139:7-8… 7 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? 8 If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.
and knows all things. (ALL). 1 Corinthians 2:10

10 For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.

And He is all these things all at once. Although it may seem like for most of us, this is the most common and basic information about the Holy Spirit, it is still amazing that many within the Body see the Spirit as lesser than God the Father or the Son, and tend to dismiss the Spirit as an inanimate object.

There are also others possibly within and without the church who would redefine God as powerless, as well as limited by time and space, and in knowledge. (Examples include Pantheists, Panantheists, Deists, Satanists, pagans, Oneness Pentecostals, Modalists, etc.)

If the Spirit of God resides within us, there are a number of things that should be a part of our lives. Use the following list of Scriptures to meditate on and ask God for what is promised about the Spirit within them. Meditate and pray on them. Take the time to dwell on each one, perhaps reading them as if for the first time, with the goggles of God, the Holy Spirit.

May it be our hope that reading these truths about the Holy Spirit will lead us to a deeper relationship with and a greater reverence for the Spirit – that sound theology would lead us to right actions, genuine love, and true worship.

Perhaps while reading these verses you begin to mourn your current condition, and wonder why these things aren’t part of your life and why you waited so long. Don’t be saddened or discouraged. The right time to repent, ask, seek and knock on the door of the Spirit is always today. Right now. There is no greater moment in your life. Why? Because it is the only place you can meet God. Not in the past. Now. Today.

Amen!

God bless you Saints!
Our Spiritual Bill of Rights.

穿搭 The Spirit helps us speak when we are in precarious situations and need to bear witness. Mark 13:11, Luke 12:12
穿搭 The Counselor teaches and reminds us of what we need to know and remember. He is our Comforter, our Advisor, our Encourager, and our strength. He guides us in the way we should go. Psalm 143:10, John chaps 14-16, Acts 9:31, 13:2, 15:28, 1 Corinthians 2:9-10, 1 John 5:5-8
穿搭 From the Spirit we receive power to be God’s witnesses to the ends of the earth. It is the Spirit who draws people to the Gospel, the Spirit who equips us with the strength we need to accomplish God’s purposes. The Holy Spirit not only initially draws people to God, He also draws believers closer to Jesus. Acts 1:8, Romans 8:26, Ephesians 3:16-19
穿搭 By the power of the Holy Spirit we put to death the misdeeds of the body. The Spirit sets us free from the sins we cannot get rid of on our own. This is a lifelong process we have entered into, in partnership with the Spirit, when we first believed. Romans 8:1-2
穿搭 Through the Spirit we have received a spirit of adoption as children, which leads us to intimacy with the Father, instead of a relationship based on fear and slavery. The Spirit bears witness to us that we are His children. Romans 8:15-16
穿搭 The Holy Spirit convicts people of sin. He does this both before we initially enter into right relationship with God and as we journey through this life as believers. John 16:7-11, 1 Thessalonians 1:5
穿搭 The Spirit brings us life and freedom. Where the Spirit is, there is freedom, not bondage or slavery. In our world that is plagued with death, this is a profound truth that points to real hope. Romans 8:10-11, 2 Corinthians 3:17
By the power of the Holy Spirit we abound with hope because our God is a God of hope, who fills His children with all joy and peace. Romans 15:13

As members of God’s kingdom community, each of us is given a manifestation of the Spirit in our lives for the purpose of the common good. We all have something to offer because of what the Spirit gives to us. 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 14:12, Ephesians 4:11-12

The fruit of being led by the Spirit of God includes love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These attitudes and actions will characterize our lives as we allow ourselves to be grown and molded by the Spirit. The Spirit is our sanctifier, or Purifier, Deliverer from Sin. 2 Corinthians 3:18, Galatians 5:22-23.