

“Encountering God: Through the Spirit”

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Part 1 of 3, summer focus: We help others follow Jesus when we *worship, grow and influence*.

Encountering God series: What it means to worship God outside the pews.

Sermon journal intro: *The Holy Spirit is shown as active in the very beginning of Genesis. He is the 3rd Person in the Trinity – The Father, Son and Spirit. The Holy Spirit’s work is evident in David’s life (Ps. 51). In John’s Gospel, Jesus breathes on the disciples as a way for them to receive the Holy Spirit. After Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection, the disciples wondered if this was the moment Israel would be politically restored. Jesus told them He had something else in store for them (another surprise). The fulfillment of the Old Testament Book of Joel (2:28-32) is seen in Acts 2, the “Day of Pentecost,” the birthday of the church. The church celebrates Pentecost today, June 4th.*

John 4:19-24

"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet."²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."²¹ Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem."²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews."²³ Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks."²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

Today’s text illustrates why the Bible is so hard to understand. Most of us have no idea about the Samaritan/Jewish rivalry. Jesus was a Jew. He met a woman who lived in a region north of Jerusalem in a region called “Samaria.” The Samaritans were the hated “half-breeds” – ½ Jewish & ½ pagan. They disagreed with the Jews. They believed that only the first 5 books of the Bible were truly scripture, whereas the Jews accepted as scripture the 39 books of the Old Testament. The Jews and Samaritans also disagreed about where the correct place of worship was. The Jews said it was in Jerusalem but the Samaritans believed it was Mt. Gerizim. The bottom line for Jesus was saying that God is Spirit and the day is coming when we will worship God everywhere. Worship isn’t about a physical location any more than our worshipping a physical god (that would be idolatry).

This series is about worshiping God, and how we want to please God in our worship. We will be serving God in heaven, but we’ll also be worshiping God in heaven. Living in the Kingdom of God means we should be learning and practicing these things.

In the previous chapter of John's Gospel, Jesus was talking to a man named Nicodemus. He was a Pharisee – an observant Jew. Jesus told him that no one could see the KOG unless he was “born again.”

That baffled Nicodemus. He took it in a literal way: “How can a man enter his mother's womb?”

John 3:5-8 *Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."* Being “born again” has a lot of different expressions (new birth, salvation, conversion, regeneration, justification) but notice the tie between being “born again” and having the Holy Spirit present.

8 things the Holy Spirit does:

Comforts/counsels us = our **Advocate** (John 14:26). It is for our advantage/benefit that we have the Holy Spirit than having to depend upon Jesus' physical presence (Jesus physical body limited Him to being in one place at one time).

Convicts us of sin (John 16:8). It's important to get the sequencing right – our “Advocate” (friend, comforter, counselor) is on our side. If we know someone is on our side and is rooting for us, we can trust that even though their words may be painful to hear that they have our best interests at heart. There's a sense of our initial conversion to Christ, but there's also an awareness of God rooting out sin in our lives after we are followers.

Empowers us for witness. In Acts 2 God used Peter in a dramatic way to communicate the message of world-saving hope just a few weeks after the greatest failure of his life. This is an amazing proof of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Peter, who had denied Jesus to (of all people) a servant girl who had accused him of being a follower of Jesus, stood up and preached such a powerful sermon that 3,000 were baptized on the Day of Pentecost. This was amazing! Peter had failed, but the Holy Spirit gave him the power to proclaim Jesus as Lord.

Creates **Fruit** in us (Galatians 5). It takes time to cultivate fruit. The story is told of a 3 yr. old little boy who went to help his dad plant a vegetable garden in the backyard. Then the boy took a nap. When he woke up from his nap he asked his dad: “Are the vegetables ready?”

Gifts us (1 Corinthians 12). You have a gift. “**UNIQUELY YOU**”

<http://asburytulsa.org/spiritual-gifts>

Guides/Teaches us (John 16:13) into all truth

Intercedes for us (Romans 8:26). The Holy Spirit is praying for us, rooting for us to prevail.

In us (John 14:17) Recreates the life of Jesus in us. Look at Jesus – that’s what the Holy Spirit is trying to do in us.

HOW do I receive the HS into my life? The Holy Spirit enters our lives when we receive Jesus as our Savior. How do I receive Jesus into my life? We recognize who HE is – the nature of His life, death and resurrection. We recognize who we are – LOVED, yet Sinners. We respond to God’s love and repent from our sin. There are no magic words that we must say – everyone has their own way. Some of us get emotional and some of us won’t. John Newton was converted while lashed to a ship’s wheel in a storm. John Wesley heard someone read from Martin Luther’s preface to the Book of Romans. *“About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”* His conversion came 3 days after his brother Charles. Charles G. Finney was converted in the woods. C.S. Lewis said he went with his brother for a trip to the zoo. He was riding in the side car of his brother’s motorcycle. *“When we set out I did not believe that Jesus is the Son of God and when we reached the zoo I did.”* left for the zoo he wasn’t a Christian, but by the time he got there, he was. Chuck Colson, who founded Prison Fellowship, asked God into his life while crying in a car on a roadside. Some of us had it happen in a church building, others at camp or while driving. Emma reluctantly (her mom made her go) went with our 7th graders to Houston on Spring Break Missions. She gave her life to Christ on that trip. She was so disappointed when the trip ended – she wished it would have lasted longer. But the impact of the trip has not ended. She’s a true witness for Christ now. She “gets” it. And she’s at Camp Egan now with Asbury’s “Camp Overlap” (we have 185 students + 40 adults there). Many can’t even put a finger on exact time it happened. Maybe you have never done this. Today is the day of salvation! Ask Jesus to come into your life.

Allowing the Holy Spirit to come into our lives, or to fill us, is like making direct deposits into the account. John Wesley referred to this activity as “the Means of Grace.”

Throughout his ministry, John Wesley taught about the means of grace, things we do regularly to put ourselves in a place where we are open to receiving the grace of God. Those practices include individual and communal works of piety and works of mercy, like private devotions, sharing in the sacraments, visiting the sick, and standing up for justice.

Many BARRIERS (*“I don’t know the exact words.” “I’ll wait for a more opportune time. I’m too bad. I’m too good – I don’t need it”*)

Allowing HS to come into our lives, or to fill us is like making direct deposits into the account. John Wesley referred to this activity as “THE MEANS OF GRACE.” Wesley taught the means of grace are things we do regularly to put ourselves in the best place to receive God’s grace. Private devotions – reading scripture/prayer. Being in a small group. Attending worship. Taking communion. These are works of piety. There are also works of mercy (compassion for others). We will also encounter God as we serve. This is one of the reason we want everyone to serve – you will meet God here.

God-moments often happen unexpectedly. Most often, however, these special encounters with HS come when we SEEK, those who have opened their hearts to receive something special from God. “Ask – Seek – Knock” & it shall be given to you.

God can come to us at any time and any place, but if we open our hearts to welcome the Holy Spirit – “Come HS, fill the hearts of your faithful & kindle in them the fire of your love.” Don’t resist or quench the Holy Spirit stirring within. The good news is that we are loved. We are forgiven in Jesus’ Name. It’s never too late to begin! Father took the 1st step in sending His Son. His Son took next step in sending the Holy Spirit. Now it’s our turn to take next step. Receive the Holy Spirit.