

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity.

What comes to mind for you at the mention of the Holy Spirit?

The Bible uses many word pictures to speak of the Holy Spirit, such as:

- Wind – because you can't see the Spirit but you can see the result of the Spirit's moving
- A spring of water – because the Spirit brings refreshment and life
- Fire – because the Spirit works purifying people the way that fire purifies metal
- A dove – because the dove is the symbol of peace and gentleness and this is the way the Spirit moves

What things do you expect to see in the lives of people who truly seek to follow Jesus?

God's Spirit makes us loving, happy, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled. Galatians 5.22-23

These things are known as the *fruit of the Spirit*. The Spirit also gives us *gifts* to help us serve each other

The Spirit has given each of us a special way of serving others. Some of us can speak with wisdom, while others can speak with knowledge, but these gifts come from the same Spirit. To others the Spirit has given great faith or the power to heal the sick or the power to work mighty miracles. Some of us are prophets, and some of us recognize when God's Spirit is present. Others can speak different kinds of languages, and still others can tell what these languages mean. But it is the Spirit who does all this and decides which gifts to give to each of us. 1 Corinthians 12.7-11

Can you think of other gifts that people have that help them serve people?

Finish today's class by praying that you will have the fruit of the Spirit growing in your life and you will recognise the gifts he has given you to serve others

Homework

Before the next class read John 10.1-9 and consider:

What does it mean to have Jesus as my Shepherd?

Do I know his voice?

Confirmation Studies



Study 2 - God

This Confirmation study material is a

Refresh Resource produced by Andrew Gamman

Mission Resourcing: *Inspiring and resourcing our communities for a journey with Christ that enriches lives and relationships*



(Begin by going over the homework from the last session. Get everyone to read out their question for God. Don't rush into attempting answers – they may emerge from this week's discussion. If not, allow extra time to discuss them at the end of the session. God is a bit bigger than our understanding, so it's okay if we don't come up with all the answers. They are questions *for God* after all!)

My understanding of God

Think of a metaphor, or draw a picture, that helps to describe how you see God?

(There are a lot of metaphors for God in the Bible: rock, light, shepherd, shield, father, mother, king, judge, potter, fortress, sun, lover, bridegroom, hiding place, shelter etc - but you may come up with one of your own.)

The psalms talk about how God is revealed in nature.

The heavens keep telling the wonders of God, and the skies declare what he has done. Psalm 19.1

In every culture people have looked at the natural world and seen there the hand of God or gods. We call this *general revelation*. It describes how by simply looking at the created order and using our reason we can know something about God. However, while people of all cultures know about God, even within New Zealand we don't necessarily know what people mean by the word "God". It can be quite vague. Some people see God as a powerful force like "the Force" in *Star Wars*, others think of God as an old man in the sky, and still others see God in an impersonal way as the life that is in everything.

Can you think of other ideas that come to mind for people when we use the word "God"?

Christians believe God has chosen to reveal himself through his actions in history and through his word that is recorded for us in the Bible. We call this *special revelation*. The story of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus is the ultimate form of special revelation. Through the Bible and by looking at Jesus we learn that God is not only powerful, he is a God of love. There are many other important things we can learn about God by way of special revelation including:

- God is *holy* – God is separate from everything created
- God is full of *grace* – God shows his favour toward people who don't deserve it and forgives them when they do wrong
- God is *just* – God wants to see the right things done and longs for a fair deal for the down-trodden and oppressed

The Trinity

What do you understand by the term "The Trinity"?

At the centre of the Christian faith is God – and God is not easy to understand. The traditional Christian view is that *God exists as three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit*. The word "person" here means something different from a human person. When we refer to God as "he" or refer to the "Father" we do not mean that God is male. God encompasses all the characteristics that are both male and female. While the Bible does talk about the Father, Son and Holy Spirit it does not anywhere use the word "Trinity". The Trinity is just our way of trying to describe something that it is quite difficult. We say God is a Trinity but we *do not* believe in three gods *nor* do we believe that God appears in three different modes (like water, ice and steam).

God the Father is God above us. Jesus is God with us. The Holy Spirit is God in us.

Jesus

How would you reply to someone who said, "I think Jesus was a good man, but claiming to be the Son of God is going a bit far"?

We can look at the example of many good people. People like Desmond Tutu have been an inspiration to many. But we would soon stop thinking well of him if he said things like, "I am the light of the world" and "I and the Father are one". A person who says things like that is either a megalomaniac or is the Son of God as he claimed to be.

From the beginning Christians have declared that Jesus is God. Charles Wesley in his great hymn of praise to Jesus, *And can it be*, puts it this way

Amazing love, how can it be

That you my God should die for me?

So Christians worship Jesus as God. But to add to the mystery, Jesus was not just truly God – he was also truly human. He got hungry and tired and was tempted just like you and me

Now that we know what we have - Jesus, this great High Priest with ready access to God - let's not let it slip through our fingers. We don't have a priest who is out of touch with our reality. He's been through weakness and testing, experienced it all - all but the sin. So let's walk right up to him and get what he is so ready to give. Take the mercy, accept the help. Hebrews 4.14-16

How can this be an encouragement to us?

Does this help you to pray when things are tough?