

New City Catechism Class

Week 36

Q36: What do we believe about the Holy Spirit?

A36: That he is God, coeternal with the Father and the Son, and that God grants him irrevocably to all who believe.

John 14:16–17

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. (esv)

Discuss the question:

- Are there ways that the role of the Holy Spirit is misunderstood in the Church today?
 - What are some common distortions with respect to the Holy Spirit?
 - Why is the Holy Spirit often associated with miraculous signs or experiences and less often associated with ordinary circumstances?
- Are there ways that the Holy Spirit is neglected or forgotten in the Church today?
 - Why does this happen?
 - Why don't we neglect or forget the Father & the Son as easily?
- Why is it important to ask this question and clarify our understanding of the Holy Spirit?
- How would you react to the following statement: "It is to the believer's advantage that Jesus would ascend to the Father so that the Holy Spirit would be sent to the believer"

Discuss the Scripture:

- What is going on in the broader context of John 14?
- Why is the Holy Spirit referred to as *another* helper/counselor?
 - In what ways does the Holy Spirit help the believer?
- Read John 16:5-7, then John 14:16-17 again...
 - How could it be advantageous for Jesus to depart and send the Holy Spirit?
- Why can't the world receive Him? How is it possible for you to receive Him?
- John 14:16-17 says that the Holy Spirit will be with you & in you forever... How is this different from the way the Spirit was active in the Old Testament?

Discuss the answer in light of the Scripture:

- What does it mean that God grants Him irrevocably to all who believe?
 - What are the implications of this?
- Why is it significant that the Holy Spirit is God, coeternal with the Father & the Son?
- The answer and the text make it clear that the Holy Spirit is a person and not a force...
 - Why would it be important to make this distinction?
 - How might it change your view of sinning if you really believe this?
 - How can this be a source of comfort and encouragement?
- What is it like to experience God living in you?

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And wonder of all wonders, the same Spirit who empowered Jesus's earthly life and sacrificial death now has been given to us today. He not only works on us, and through us, but he dwells in us (Romans 8:9, 11; 2 Timothy 1:14). He has been given to us (Luke 11:13; John 7:38–39; Acts 5:32; 15:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:8). We have received him (John 20:22; Acts 2:38; 8:15, 17, 19; 10:47; 19:2; Romans 5:5; 8:15; 1 Corinthians 2:12; 2 Corinthians 5:5; 1 John 3:24). How remarkable that we may be said to even have the Spirit (Romans 8:9, 23; 1 Corinthians 6:19). The very power of God himself has come to make himself at home in some real degree, to increasing effect, in us. We are his temple, both individually and collectively (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19).

He is no mere force. He is not a thing but a Person. He can be lied to (Acts 5:3), resisted (Acts 7:51), grieved (Isaiah 63:10–11; Ephesians 4:30), blasphemed (Matthew 12:32; Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10). He comforts us (Acts 9:31), guides and directs (Acts 13:2, 4; 15:28; 16:6; 20:23; 21:11), transforms us into the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17–18), and empowers the everyday Christian life (Romans 14:17; 15:13; 1 Corinthians 12:3; Jude 20). He appoints leaders in the church (Acts 20:28), confirms God's word with miraculous gifts (Hebrews 2:4), sanctifies our imperfect efforts (Romans 15:16), knits us together as a fellowship (2 Corinthians 13:14; Hebrews 6:4), and fills us with praise (Acts 2:4) and with boldness for ministry (Acts 1:8; 4:8, 31; 6:5; 7:55; 9:17; 11:24; 13:9, 52). He communicates the Father's love to us (Romans 5:5; Ephesians 3:14–19) and infuses the Christian life with joy (Acts 13:52; Romans 14:17; 15:13; 1 Thessalonians 1:6). In him we are sealed, kept, and secured by God till the end (Ephesians 1:13–14).

We believe that when we're alone with God's word, we're not alone. That when we pray, someone intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words (Romans 8:26–27). That a divine Person in us empowers us for personal sacrifice for the needs of others. That when they drag us before rulers and authorities on account of Christ, he will give us, in that moment, something to say (Mark 13:11; Luke 12:12). That we can have courage in conflict and joy in affliction (1 Thessalonians 1:6; Titus 3:5). That if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more will our Father give us the greatest gift of all — himself in the person of his Spirit (Luke 11:13)?

We believe that the Christian life is not natural. That there is more to reality than meets the eye — oh, so much more. That what counts most, and is most ultimate, is unseen. That the Spirit is alive and well today, and that he makes all the difference.”

(David Mathis, *Desiring God*)