Over the last few weeks we’ve seen Jesus spending time with his friends. He knows that he is going to be crucified and is going back to heaven and is concerned that they learn what that will mean for them. Jesus has just announced that He will be leaving His disciples and they are now distraught and no doubt disappointed. They are extremely unsettled and so the Saviour takes three chapters to assure them that they will not be left alone.

Jesus knew that they needed to learn as much as possible because they were going to take the church forward in their day. We also need to learn as much as possible because we need to take the church forward in our day.

I think there is real misunderstanding of Holy Spirt in the church today. I suspect that lots of people don’t understand that he is a person, not a divine force. This section is about engaging with Holy Spirit. As part of my preparation my mind went back to a book I read a couple years ago called, “The Forgotten God: Reversing our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit” by Francis Chan. Here’s something he said: “*From my perspective, the Holy Spirit is tragically neglected and, for all practical purposes, forgotten. While no evangelical would deny His existence...there are millions of churchgoers across America who cannot confidently say they have experienced His presence or action in their lives over the past year. And many of them do not believe they can.*”

Pastor J.D. Greear believes evangelicals generally fall into one of two extremes.

• Some seem obsessed with Him, relating to Him in strange, mystical ways. Their experiences with the Spirit seem to coincide with an emotionally ecstatic moment.

• Other Christians react to that perceived excess by neglecting His ministry altogether. They believe in the Holy Spirit, but they relate to Him the same way they relate to their pituitary gland: grateful it’s in there; know it’s essential for something; don’t pay much attention to it.

I’m not sure where you fall in these categories, or perhaps you’re somewhere in between. There is no way we can cover everything the bible teaches about the Spirit today, in fact, we will come back to this in the lead up to Pentecost.

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.*”

Notice that the whole Trinity is involved here – Jesus asks the Father who gives the Spirit.

The word helper is rich and deep in meaning and can be translated with words like: “comforter, counsellor, encourager, adviser, pleader, proxy and advocate.” When Jesus says he will give another helper he means one like him: one who will comfort, counsel, encourage etc.

The helper will be present with God’s people forever.

He is the Spirit of truth.

You can’t know the Spirit if you don’t know Jesus.

He doesn’t just live with us but in us.

John 14:26 – “*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.*”

Notice the Trinity again. One of the things Holy Spirit does is teach believers. He helped those disciples remember what they had been taught and helps us as well.

John 15:26 – “*But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me*.”

Trinity again – Jesus sends the Spirit who comes from the Father. He comes to bear witness about Jesus. He doesn’t promote himself, instead he points people to Jesus.

John 16:7 - “*Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.*” The word “nevertheless” is used as a contrast or antithesis to what the disciples are feeling. Jesus then says something to get their attention: “I tell you the truth...” Jesus always told the truth but it’s as if He’s saying, “Listen up guys. This is really important.”

What He says next is shocking: “*it is to your advantage that I go away...*” This word means, “useful, profitable or beneficial.” There was no way the disciples were thinking that it was a good thing that Jesus was about to leave them. How could it be to their advantage that Jesus was going away? Of what benefit would it be for Jesus to be gone from them?

Jesus tells them why His departure would be profitable for them: “*for if I do not go away, the Helper, will not come to you*.” Three times Jesus uses the word, “go” to help the disciples understand that He was about to leave them. But it would be to their advantage because the Helper could then arrive. His going is essential to the Spirit’s coming.

Here’s a question to ponder. Would you rather have Jesus right next to you or have the Holy Spirit within you? Pastor and author J.D. Greear: “*When Jesus was on earth, his miraculous work was contained to wherever he was at the moment. Now that he is in us, his power is wherever we are. The Spirit inside us is better than Jesus beside us...*”

Theologian and author A.W. Tozer says: “*If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference.*”

Would you notice if the Holy Spirit was no longer in your life? Would anyone else? The Holy Spirit will not be withdrawn but we can withdraw from Him.

The Bible says there at least two ways we can short-circuit the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives.

• We can grieve the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 4:30-31: “*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, along with all malice*.” To “grieve” means, “to make sad or sorry.” We can grieve Him by holding on to sin in our lives.

• We can quench the Holy Spirit. 1 Thessalonians 5:19: “*Do not quench the Spirit*.” To “quench” means, “to put out a fire.” When we ignore the Holy Spirit by continuously compromising our morals and biblical convictions, the fire of the Holy Spirit can be reduced to smouldering embers.

One of the best ways to make sure we’re not grieving or quenching the Holy Spirit is to keep short accounts with God and with others. When you mess up, own it. When you sin, confess it. When you’ve wronged someone, make it right.

Galatians 5:25: “*If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit*.”

Living by the Spirit

Here then are some ways we can keep in step with the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18 “*And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.*” It actually means go on being filled – it’s easy to fill our lives with all sorts of stuff; let’s make sure we ask God to fill us every day, and many times during the day.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 “*Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.*” The way we live should declare to the world that Holy Spirit is present within us. Or to say it another way, the world will learn about God based upon the way we are living. That’s a weighty responsibility and a holy charge.

1 Corinthians 3:16 “*Do you not know that you [plural] are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?*” quote from Francis Chan: “*If it’s true that the Spirit of God dwells in us and that our bodies are the Holy Spirit’s temple, then shouldn’t there be a huge difference between the person who has the Spirit of God living inside of him or her and the person who does not?*”

1 Corinthians 12:7, every believer has been given at least one spiritual gift that is to be used to build up the body of Christ: “*To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good*.” Discover the gifts the Holy Spirit has given you and then unleash them for God’s glory and the growth of His church.

Galatians 5:22-23: “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*.” Is the fruit of the Spirit ripening in you today?

Ephesians 6:18 *And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people*. To pray in the Spirit means to follow His lead and to pray in His power.

Last pic I’m making this bit up!