

# Being a Spirit-Filled Church (Part 1)

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[ 0 : 00 ] This is a special retreat on the Holy Spirit, right? If anyone come to you and say that he or she is an expert of the Holy Spirit, please don't believe them.

That is the truth, that is the truth. The Holy Spirit is perhaps one of the most elusive topics. Martin Lloyd-Jones mentioned that this is perhaps also one of the most neglected topics in churches. And you either overemphasize it and therefore leading in an unhelpful direction, or you underemphasize it. So there are two ways that we can make the error when it comes to the topic of the Holy Spirit.

It's probably important for us before we dive into the third member of the Trinity to just have a quick overview of what the Trinity is all about. Father, Son, Spirit.

Now, what does that mean? I'm going to go to just two passages. We're going to camp most of our time in Acts chapter 2 for this retreat. But before that, let us go to a passage of Jesus' teaching in John chapter 14.

[ 1 : 12 ] So I just want us to open our own Bible and take a look at these verses. Now, this is what many Christians call the upper room discourse.

It's like a long chunk of teaching from Jesus, three chapters. And if you are at the end of your life, you are about to go to the cross, you are about to die, the things that you say before you depart will be really important.

So this is the teaching of Jesus. We're going to read chapter 14, John 14, from verse 15 onward.

I'm going to read for us. Are we all there in John 14, verse 15?

Just give me a nod if you're there. I really want you to look at this text and be confronted by this text. As Kevin mentioned, let's look at the word of Jesus and not the word of a man. Reading for us from ESV in verse 15.

If you love me, you will keep my commandment. So one of the marks of being filled with Jesus, with the Holy Spirit, is obedience, keeping the commandment of Christ.

[ 2 : 20 ] And then verse 16, And I will ask the Father, Jesus referring to another person of training, I will ask the Father and He will give you another helper to be with you forever.

Now most of us know that the Holy Spirit is known as a helper to us. But notice there's a word here, another. Another. What does that imply? Another.

Someone who is similar to Himself. Jesus has been there helping them, walking with them. And the Father will send them another helper.

Let's camp there for a while. What does that mean? Someone of equal status. In fact, Jesus even implied later on, that this is going to be a better gift for you.

That I will go, and the Father will send the helper, another helper to you. And verse 17, I'm going to just read the second part. You know Him, for He dwells with you, and will be in you.

[ 3 : 25 ] So this is the next level, right? Christ dwells on earth with the disciples, walking side by side. As a person who is fully human, fully God, walking with the disciples.

And now you have the gift of another person of the Trinity, who dwells not just with you, but in you. Now how does that work? Dwelling with you, and in you.

That really is the goal of this retreat. We're going to see how the Spirit dwells among us, with us, and in us. Now, one observation.

Notice that whenever the Holy Spirit is being mentioned in this text, you have He or Him being referred. The Holy Spirit is a person.

The Holy Spirit is not a thing. The Holy Spirit is a person. It's a third person of the Trinity. And here's what is so complex about this whole topic.

[ 4 : 33 ] You have a person who is equal to Jesus, who comes from the Father. Jesus is praying to the Father to send us another helper.

And in verse 23, in John 14, if anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

Are you there with me at verse 23? Now, this is mind-blowing. So, he is leaving, and he is sending another helper, and now in verse 23, we will come to him, the person who keeps the command or the person who is loved by God, referring to Christians, right?

And we will make our home with him. Wow. So, when you get one person of the Trinity, you get all three. Okay, so how does that work?

He's leaving, he's telling us that we are going to receive another helper, the Spirit is going to come to be with us and in us, and then through the Spirit, we are going to get all three members of the Trinity now, because I only have 30 minutes, and I want to make sure that we have lunch later on.

[ 5 : 46 ] This is a complex topic, the Trinity, but maybe the best way for me to put it is this, Christians are those who believe in the God that is bigger than us, right?

I love the way we open the retreat. We have a picture of the stars, the galaxies, a God that is big, a God that is huge, a God that is transcendent, and in our singing earlier, it's really God-centered.

I don't know whether you know this about the lyrics of those songs. We're praising a God, a King, who is big, who is mighty, and He is with us.

He dwells with us. Now, that is meant to blow your mind. That is meant to lead us into worship. And therefore, as Christians, because we believe in the God that is bigger than us, that is transcendent.

Now, what it means is that we cannot fully understand Him. Are we okay with that? In some ways.

And yet, at the same time, His attention, we cannot fully understand Him, but He has chosen to make Himself known to us, you and I, in a deeply personal way.

[ 7 : 00 ] and He has given to us His Word, the Bible, which is why from the get-go, we look at the Word of Jesus from the Scriptures.

So, there are all these things that I'm mentioning to you right now. I'm actually inviting you to simply take God's words as it is and believe it. The Scripture presents to us a God that is one, one God.

that's the emphasis of the entire Old Testament. The Lord, our God, is one. And one God, three persons. Three persons. The Father sent the Son.

The Son went to the cross. And now, as the Son is interceding for us at the right hand of the Father, we have the Spirit dwelling with us and in us.

One God, three persons. Now, that's the unique feature of the Christian faith. Are you all okay with that? I just want to make sure that we are all on the same page. That is huge.

[ 8 : 01 ] That is huge. Now, someone once said that if the Christian faith is a scam, someone tried to make money by creating, inventing a religion, this would not be one of the features. Because no matter whoever tried to explain it, you are going to make yourself look a little bit foolish and stupid because you cannot quite fully explain how it works.

If you want to invent a cow, you want to make sure that it's something that you can share with people in a way that they think that you are smart. But any pastors, any theologians, any preachers who try to, you know, use our own intelligence to make sense of the Holy Spirit, are going to come away feeling like that doesn't quite fully satisfy or answer all the questions.

And that is okay, guys. That is okay because we serve and we believe in a transcendent God. So that is how I want to begin before we go into the person of the Holy Spirit.

We are going to look at Acts chapter 2 for a moment. The Holy Spirit is not a thing. He is not just feelings and emotions, a tingling sensation.

He is a person, the sovereign God of the universe. So let's turn to Acts chapter 2. This is how, this is a famous passage. I think many of us here are familiar with Acts chapter 2, Pentecost.

[ 9 : 18 ] Are we there at Acts chapter 2? Just want to make sure we are there. Let me read for us as you follow me along in your Bible. Acts chapter 2. When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place and suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind.

Now notice, this wind comes from heaven. It doesn't come from earth. So the wind has arrived from heaven and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

And divided tongues of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

We'll stop here for a moment. Pentecost is a Jewish feast seven weeks after the Passover to celebrate the first fruit of the wheat harvest. And for today, for many of us, it is actually seven weeks after Easter Sunday where we remember, where we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the church.

Now Acts is not an easy book to read. It's not easy at all. It is descriptive. It tells us what happened. It is not meant to be prescriptive. And when I put it that way, there are two ways that we can make error in how we read and apply the book of Acts.

[10:41] Not just this portion but the whole book. If we say that this is supposed to be prescriptive, that means whatever happens here, let's try to apply this by copying what's happening here.

I'm going to go to places where it's just going to feel really, really odd because these are actually records of what happened and it's not so straightforward in terms of how we apply it in the here and now.

But if we say that this is purely descriptive and let's not try to emulate what's going on here, again, we lose sight of how valuable this text is in imparting to us wisdom and revealing to us who God is. So, let's talk air or leader extreme. But what is this text really saying, let me just try to lower down my bar by saying that I'm not here to teach you techniques but the first part, the first 30 minutes, if the takeaway is that the Holy Spirit is a person and He is fully, He is God, that would be a great outcome.

But let me build my case from this text. Now, notice in the first few verses of Acts chapter 2, you have reference of mighty rushing winds from heaven.

[11:59] Winds. I know that over the past few weeks there were typhoons in this city, right? One or two. I am really glad that I arrived just after the typhoon. But you guys experience typhoon.

We don't get to experience typhoon in Singapore. And my kids, when they arrive, they're like, it would be exciting if we can bump into a typhoon. I'm like, no. No, you're a mighty rushing wind. We're talking about really, really unusual kind of wind that came down from heaven, that they knew this is supernatural.

And what else do we see here? Fire. Fire, right in this text. Prophetic utterance. Now, do you know that these are all little, little clues images from the Old Testament?

Let me give you some examples. Maybe let's don't go back to Old Testament first. Let's look at the book of Luke. Because Acts is written by the same author, Dr. Luke. In Luke chapter 3, you don't have to turn to your Bible, but let me read for us.

This is what Luke said. I baptize you in water, but he who is mightier than I is coming. The strap of whose sandal I'm not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

[13:12] Fire. So, this is a fulfillment of what John the Baptist said. So, and we see further back in the Old Testament, 2 Samuel. Let me just read for us one verse from 2 Samuel.

When the Lord appears, this is how Samuel describes, the channels of the seas were seen. Like the seas, you can actually see what's going on under the sea.

The foundation of the world were laid bare at the rebuke of the Lord, at the blast of his breath. Now, Samuel described to us a God that is majestic, a God that is huge.

Or what about the psalmist in Psalm 18? The earth rocked the foundations of the mountains tremble and quakes because he was angry.

Smokes went up from his nostrils and devouring fire from his mouth. Verse 13 of Psalm 18, the Lord thundered in the heavens and the Most High uttered his voice and he flashed forth lightnings and routed them.

[14:17] Now, do you notice the pattern? Storms, fire, majestic signs of great power, all these, they were imageries of the presence of God.

Whenever God arrived, we go back to Exodus in Mount Sinai, there was smoke, there was fire, thunder, and the descending of God, his very presence where Moses came close.

He was beaming with glory. So that is the presence of God. Now, there's one more thing in the book of Numbers which may give us some clue to Acts 2, prophetic utterance.

In Numbers 11, when the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to Moses, he took some of his spirit and put it on 70 elders. Numbers 11, verse 25, I'm reading from that.

And as soon as the spirit rested on them, they prophesied. They spoke. So, again, Acts chapter 2 is helping us to see a continuation of the whole Bible.

[ 15 : 21 ] That whenever the presence of God arrived, it is accompanied by these signs. fire, storms, things that are frightening and scary because who can tame the Lord?

Who can tame the Lord? He's not to be controlled or summoned by us. He's sovereign. He is God. He's the spirit of God. And then, we see here utterance, words, that come from the mouth of man, declaring who he is, declaring his holiness.

Now, what do you think is my point here? In the first four verses of Acts chapter 2. Maybe I should put it there. What do you think is the Bible's point in those first four verses describing Pentecost? The Lord has arrived. The Lord God, Yahweh, the Lord who cannot even be named, he has arrived. he has arrived. He has come, he has fulfilled his promise to dwell among us. Through Jesus, through what he has done, his spirit will now be poured out upon all of us.

[ 16 : 39 ] Now, you know what happened when we read Acts chapter 2, those four verses? We tend to skip past them really quickly. I don't know about you. I tend to skip past those four verses very quickly and go down to the actions, right?

Because right after that, you have tongues, you have an outstanding sermon from Peter and you have things that happen, you have the community coming together, and then you have signs and wonders that follow after this chapter.

That becomes something that the apostles experience and do as they preach and proclaim the gospel. And we often read the book of Acts, particularly Acts chapter 2, asking, what is this about us?

What does this passage tell us about what we must do to experience this power? Can I just lovingly encourage you, Wondermark Church, and I say the same to Redemption 2 Church as well, whenever we come to a text, let's first ask the question, what does this reveal about God?

How big, how marvelous, how praiseworthy He is? This is a declaration of the Lord's arrival. And this must cause to my and obvious question, how can the big, transcendent God dwells in you and I?

[ 17 : 58 ] Thank you for your prayer earlier, Kevin. I appreciate the part when you mentioned that this is a fellow sinner, this is just a man used by God, filled by His Spirit, here, wanting to serve you and love you, not because of me, but because of God.

And I often find myself wondering, how can God use an unworthy man like me? And the only way I can make sense of it is to look to the cross.

Jesus, Jesus is the only reason. Let me just, before I continue, let me just share a little bit of my testimony. This is the church that I met for the first time. I think it's helpful, just a bit of an introduction.

I came to faith, I mean, there's actually a few parts where I felt that I was born again. I don't know whether it's theologically correct to put it that way. I was born again once, born again a second time, and there were like three occasions when I felt I had this born again experience.

The first time was when I was a teenager in my late teens, standing a mega church environment. A friend invited me to their church, and the pastors was talking about hell, and I was terrified, and I rushed forward to receive the salvation, say the sinner's prayer, and the idea that I had was I go to hell, and this church focused a lot on love, and how God will help me in my studies, and my career, so I want to have a good life now, through the help of this God, Jesus, his name, and after that, I got a free ticket out from hell into heaven, so that's quite a good deal, so I signed up for that by raising my hand and said a prayer, and I was at age 19.

[ 19 : 36 ] At age 24, it was about 20 years ago, my life was falling apart, I was really, really downcast, things were so bad that I missed an exam paper, because I felt so, I think back then, 20 years ago, the word depression wasn't quite commonly used, right, I think now, in the past five to seven years or so, mental health awareness has become a thing, 20 years ago, if you feel depressed, and you tell your parents that you feel depressed, what do you think they would tell you to do?

don't be depressed, right, just get out of bed, and do something about it, but that was the first time I felt that whatever confidence I had as a young man, everything was falling apart, and I experienced God's grace and goodness in my life, I fell on my knee, and I confessed to him that God, all this while I've been using you, I've been using you to get what I want, and now I realize that going on my way is bad for me, I want to trust in a better way, help me, so I don't know which is the exact conversion experience, but at age 34 that was very profound, in my late 20s I had another profound

experience, where I literally was shivering in the presence of God, I was terrified, there would be a workshop later on about reform and charismatic, right, that was the time when I understood the reform theology for the first time, that God is sovereign, and as I look at his word, as I realize that this cannot be written by mere human beings, there was a sense of fear that filled me, that God is real, that God is meek, and when I think about my sin, even as a Christian, there were many moments where I will call that I fall into sins, or I fall into temptations, but you want to know the truth? The truth is I disobey, and calling that falling into sin often makes it sound like I'm just a victim of temptations, of unmet needs, of circumstances, I start to use the language of God, I disobey you, and I need to repent before you, and I need to have the fear of you put in me, and I need to take my walk seriously, and I need to know that I am a temple of the Holy Spirit, I'm called to be holy as you are holy, that was my turn, I don't know whether it's quite a born again experience, but it was very, very profound, it was very profound, so those three points made me realize how big, how good God is to a sinner like myself, and here's how I've grown in experiencing the Holy Spirit, when I was young, when I think about the experience of the Holy Spirit, it is always something that comforts me, it is always something that makes me feel delightful, and love, and as I grow older, I begin to realize that the Holy Spirit, if God is to be God, and I am to be a worshiper of God, often the Holy Spirit comes in the form of disagreement, comes in the form of telling me that, hey, you are walking the wrong way, turn back, hey, your heart, your heart, though your actions may seem right, there are areas in your hearts that are not right before God, even for the right things that you do with the wrong motive, the Holy Spirit often convict me towards repentance, we come from a church, Redemption Hill church, how should I describe, we are big on gospel, we are big on theology, and we are also a church that believe in vibrant community, so we want to make sure everyone is plugged into the community and serving the city, we are a church who also believe highly in experiential faith, that the faith is not just something that we know intellectually, but it is to be applied in everyday's life, so I've grown from how in my younger days that the experience of the Holy Spirit is maybe the worship service, maybe in the way certain elements in the services is being designed, to a constant daily fellowship with God that often moved me to tears, I got sent a press period, man, by the name of Tim Keller, and I just, in the past few years, he's the guy that made me tear up the most, that's listening to his podcast as I'm driving and I'm just fascinated by how often when I'm pointing to the bigness of Jesus, the Spirit just convict my heart, this is Jesus, this is what he has done for you, and the Spirit convict and moved my heart towards repentance and faith in Jesus.

[ 24 : 23 ] Now, we are going to be praying later on for each other, on that, for the Spirit to fill us, but not just in, sometimes, some of us, when we experience someone praying over you, you may not even experience anything, but you know what faith look like?

Faith is living not by sight, and not by our own emotions, even when I don't feel it, I trust that God is at work, and that is the mark of the Holy Spirit.

There is, whenever we talk about the topic of the Holy Spirit, there is something that we can often fall into, the language of being filled by the Holy Spirit, being filled by the Holy Spirit, and you know what, you and I are most prone to respond to words like that, filled by the Holy Spirit, we can sometimes think in terms of this way, I have three units of the Holy Spirit right now, I want more, Kevin, can you pray for me so that I can receive six units of the Holy Spirit, that there is a sense that we begin to reduce the Holy Spirit to things, he's a thing, or we begin to reduce any kind of teachings of the Holy Spirit to techniques, how can we summon the Holy Spirit?

Now, let's consider for a moment, the wind came from heaven, the signs of fires and storms point to the bigness of God. Who can say that we can summon the Holy Spirit with a prayer?

Now, those who abide most deeply in the Holy Spirit understand the Spirit bigness, and therefore, coming before the Spirit means surrender, surrender and repentance.

[ 26 : 09 ] Another aspect of what it means to be a Spirit-filled church is that you and I, we are siblings. I'm going to talk about that more in session 3, what it means to be brothers and sisters in Christ, equal.

There is a culture in our church, in Redemption Youth Church that we often take for granted, because we are in an Asian city, similar to you, Asian city, and in a lot of Asian churches and contexts, it's quite hierarchical, right?

The guy who leads the church, the guy who pastors, the guy who stands in front to preach and teach, is often deemed with a great sense of respect, which is good and healthy, but at some point often it tip over to become unhealthy.

Now, Christians believe in the priesthood of all believers, because you and I, we all have the person of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. So, if we ever use language such as, your name is Leo, right? John, sorry, Leo was another guy that I spoke to earlier, John, so if John come up and he claims to be more sensitive in the Holy Spirit than Kevin, we have a problem there, in some ways you can almost, if you look at it in the best possible way, you could be referring to maturity, you could be referring to someone who understands and who walks with them, so there are those categories, but if we use the category of Asian religion to talk about the Holy Spirit, where one person is a shifu in the Holy Spirit, more than the other person, and has the power to summon the Holy Spirit in a more evident, experiential way than others, friends, Watermark Church, can I gently, lovingly, encourage you to steer away from that, to steer away from that.

[ 28 : 11 ] The great equalizer of the cross is that you and I, as believers, we all have the Holy Spirit. I need you to pray for me. I need you. I'm standing up here preaching this word, I believe, because of the prayers of all of you guys for this retreat, and that makes me feel empowered to do this work.

By my own strength, I am very, very weak. That's the truth. So this is not an expert of the Holy Spirit coming to lead this retreat so that you can learn from me. Let's learn from each other.

Let's point each other to who Jesus is. Just one more thing before I close this portion. One of the other signs of being dwelt by the Holy Spirit is that your life will start to feel uncomfortable.

I don't know whether you experience that. It's like, have you ever prayed prayers like, God, I just want to experience you, know you, love you, walk according to your ways, just do whatever you want in my life.

Have you prayed that prayer before? And then you start to experience real afflictions and sufferings and things don't go your way. And if you look back, hey, I actually prayed that prayer and God is answering my prayer, right?

[ 29 : 27 ] I love this quote by C.S. Lewis. Let me pray for us and then we'll pray for each other in a moment. Imagine yourself as a living house. This is from C.S. Lewis. I did not come up with that. God comes in to rebuild the house.

At first, perhaps you understand what he's doing. He's getting the drain right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on. You knew that those jobs needed to be done, so you are not surprised. You need a new drain, you need a roof to be fixed.

But presently, he starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is he up to? The explanation is that he is building quite a different house from the one that you thought of.

He's throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor here, running up the towers, making courtyard and it hurts. You thought that you were being made into a decent little cottage.

But friends, he is building a palace. He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it by himself. So that is the implication of what it means to be filled by the Holy Spirit.

[ 30 : 29 ] God intends to live in you. And it's no minor renovation and it could mean tearing down the entire building and rebuilding it all over again.

When the Holy Spirit comes into your life, you are now partaker of divine nature. I'm quoting 2 Peter 1 verse 4. Partaker of divine nature.

In some ways, the triune God, all three persons of the Trinity, is now dwelling in you in some ways through the Holy Spirit. Have you been awestruck? Let me pause for a moment. Have you been awestruck by the fact that God can dwell in you?

Have you been awestruck by how much it costs Jesus so that your sins may be forgiven, that you can be justified in order for His Spirit to come and dwell in you?

Have you come to a place where God, this is too awesome for words? This is beyond comprehension. Me, the temple for your Holy Spirit. God can pray.

[ 31 : 32 ] And if you have not, I think some of us, maybe you have not yet considered that today could be a good day for you to pray and ask God to help you to understand that.

when we did a series on the Holy Spirit about years ago, and this is why I'm camping quite long here on the person of the Holy Spirit, just to make sure that we are clear before we move to other things.

I did a short survey in a couple of CGs that I attended, just to ask folks, hey, after our series on the Holy Spirit, what's your most significant takeaway? And about half of them say that the most important takeaway is that they realize that the Spirit is a person and not a thing.

The Spirit is a person and not a thing. I'm talking about church-going believers who have been coming to church for years, telling me that that's the biggest takeaway.

I think one way that we can apply this today is to pray. It's to pray for each other, to be filled by the Holy Spirit in the right way.

[ 32 : 37 ] Not referring to more of Him in terms of reducing Him to units, but the fullness of God. And when God moves into you, to live in you, He's going to make some really significant changes.

So let's pray for each other. There are some of us here, so there are two categories of people here. Is it okay if we end this time by some prayer for each other? I thought it would be good for us to look out for two groups of people here.

I'm sure we will fall into either of those categories or even both categories. We'll just be spending time to pray for each other. Romans 5, verse 5, talks about the Holy Spirit being poured, sorry, God's love being poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

Some of us here, you know the love of God intellectually. You really do. You really, really study your Bible and you have attended church for a long time.

Jesus love you. Jesus loves me this, I know, for the Bible tells me so, right? You believe in that. You have sung that many times. But you know that deep down there are many insecurities in your life.

[ 33 : 51 ] And the answers to those insecurities and need of approval from men, the answers to all those things is really coming to a deep appreciation and conviction that God really loves you.

And who can help you to do that? So one of the spirit's work in the believer's life is to take whatever that we know in our knowledge and apply that to our hearts. So if we can pray for each other on that, things that you already know.

Most of us say we don't need new knowledge. We need knowledge applied. Let's ask the Holy Spirit to help us to do that. And then there's also a second category of people, those who feel stuck in sin.

Those who feel stuck in cycles of sins where you know that you are a temple of the Holy Spirit, but those areas that you are struggling with often have been used by the evil one to cast down.

You know the evil one often are, so let me just use this analogy, I don't do boxing, but I heard that in boxing there's something called the two-step punch or something like that, so there's two ways that the devil can actually attack us.

[ 35 : 03 ] One is by telling you that your sins don't matter. Your sins don't matter. Because of what Christ has done for you, go ahead and sin and do whatever you want.

Satisfied your flesh in the moment, because your sin isn't really such a big deal. Jesus has died for your sins, so just go ahead and sin. Now once you commit those sins, you know what he's going to do?

He's going to tell you the opposite. Your sin is a great deal that has disqualified you from being a child of God. If that's you, you find yourself falling into that kind of attack, falling into that kind of cycle where you fall into sin and you feel discouraged, disqualified.

Can I tell you there's another role of Holy Spirit in the scripture? He applies to what many theologians call sonship into our hearts. I was over there just now when we were worshipping with my two older boys.

They were having a fight while the worship leaders were leading songs. I was feeling a little bit embarrassed here. Look, we are here to lead a retreat to speak to you guys and my kids are standing in front having a fight.

[ 36 : 12 ] I'm trying to keep it low-key and I'm trying to control them. There was a moment that I decided to hug the two of them and they calmed down. I was reminding them, you know what, I really love you guys.

Come, we can do this together. We can focus on God, the one who loves us. Let's worship him when you come down and we will focus on God. I think often the love of God calms our soul.

So let's pray for each other that we remember this sonship that's been given to us. It cannot be taken away from anything that we've done. That can be heard.

Thank you.