

SEPTEMBER 11, 2022
LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
SPIRIT [IN]FORMED
1 CORINTHIANS 12:1-3
FALL QUARTER WEEK 1 OF 12

Getting to Know Each Other Better

1. Who was your biggest idol when you were growing up? Why?

Dave Burns. He wasn't' an idol, but he was a hero. He was the pastor at the church I grew up in. I wanted so much to have his relationship with God, and he is one major reason I went into vocational Christian ministry.

How about you?

Renewed by Grace/Equipped as Disciples

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-3

2. Generally speaking, what has been your knowledge of, and interaction with, the Spirit over the years of your Christian life?

I wrote this question to give you the chance to learn about the experiences the people in your group have had with the Holy Spirit over the years they have walked with Christ. The discussion around this question could go on for as long as you want it to, probably. Given that, you may want to decide how much time to devote to it and limit yourself to that number. If helpful, I have written a few additional questions you might consider asking. As always, feel free to choose one, all or none of them.

- How has your interaction with the Holy Spirit changed over the years?
- How has your understanding of Who the Holy Spirit is changed over the years?
- How has your appreciation for the Holy Spirit changed over the years?
- Would you characterize your initial encounters with the Spirit as sensational or minimal? How have you seen growth toward “the middle” since then?

Personally, my knowledge of, and interaction with, the Spirit has been closer to minimal than sensational. I came to Christ in an American Baptist Church and was raised in a theologically conservative, evangelical church. We recognized the Person and role of the Spirit, but talked predominantly about Christ and God the Father (which I believe is the biblically accurate thing to do.) Over the years I have seen growth in the area of giving credit where credit is due, which is to say that I have seen movement in my recognizing the work of the Spirit in my life and in other's lives, and in the guidance and direction of circumstances. I have also been helped by biblical phrases such as the fact that “the Lord is the Spirit” (2 Cor 3.18) and “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom 8.9).

There were times in my walk where the Spirit was, as Francis Chan called him, “the forgotten God.” Now I recognize, when I pray to our Heavenly Father, that it is the Holy Spirit Who is doing the working and that He is dispatched to answer my petitions. There is also a greater awareness and thankfulness for the nudges He gives me, as well as for the thoughts and ideas He puts into my head. I am also learning to heed His warnings to “not do this” or to “not do that.” I know when He is saying, “Stop,” and I always feel terrible when I run that red light, so to speak.

There is more, but I will stop here.

How about for you?

(One idea I had about how you can handle this question is that you decide to have two or three people answer it and that you don't worry about or concern yourself with having everyone respond. But you'll do what you think is best.)

3. What are some things Ryan taught which proved to be most helpful for you right now? Why? Did he teach anything which proved to be challenging/unsettling? Why?

This is a great time to invite people to review their Outlines and their Sermon Notes and to share about what was helpful and challenging. And, of course, the purpose of this wide-ranging question is to give people an opportunity to share about how God spoke to them, and to set up a discussion around those areas.

It's always appropriate to ask if others in the group share the same "answer" as the "answer" that the person shared, who just shared. No need to go in a circle or in a non-organic or non-relational way. If someone shares an "answer," and you ask and discover that many others in the group have the same one, then that's a perfect time to have a discussion about that "answer." I trust the Holy Spirit will take the conversation in the direction He wants it to go. (And thanks for listening to Him even as you listen to the group. That is one skill Life Group leaders continue to develop, isn't it? We are listening on two levels as we facilitate and guide.)

Here are some of the things which were helpful for me (absent my "Why?" response) -

- Seek not to live in the sensational or the minimal. Seek to live in the middle. Really, seek to live in the biblical.
- God can and does speak to us outside of Scripture. However, I believe the primary way He speaks is through illumination of the Scriptures. Reading the Bible with the Holy Spirit's Presence and help is the best and most effective way to hear from God and to follow His will for our lives. However, it is truly exciting when He nudges you, or gives you an idea or thought you were not even contemplating, or brings a friend or a sermon or blog or podcast alongside you and speaks to you through that.
- That idols may not speak but they can surely guide a life.
- That the main role of the Holy Spirit is to help us see and savor Jesus.
- That the main role of the Holy Spirit is to make much of Jesus.
- That the main role of the Holy Spirit is to reveal Jesus.

The main "unsettling" thing he said came at the beginning of the message when he taught that the Greek word translated "spiritual gifts" is really "spirituals." I think this is going to come out much more in next Sunday's message, and I think it is going to prove "interesting" for those who have always been taught that every Christian gets at least one spiritual gift that he/she keeps for their entire life. There are some implications of "Now concerning the spirituals..." that are not present in "Now concerning spiritual gifts." We will see how Ryan chooses to handle it.

Of course, the main challenge from the message came in the "Jesus is Lord" section and is about keeping my allegiance to Him and maintaining my affection for Him.

What about for you all?

4. **Discuss this quote from Fredrick Dale Bruner - "The work of the Holy Spirit is to thrill us with Christ. The Holy Spirit is shy about everything except Christ, but about Christ, the Spirit is downright bullish."**

- **What are some thoughts you have about the quote?**

First of all, it really resonates with my heart. I love that the work of the Holy Spirit is to make much of Christ in us, and to make Christ to be much to us (as Ryan said, "To help us see and savor Jesus.").

Second, I love that the role of the Spirit is to magnify Christ because, among other things, this makes it really easy to see if it is the Holy Spirit who is at work, or if it is another spirit who is at work. A spirit other than the Holy Spirit will not want to make much of Jesus.

Third, the thing I need the most is to be thrilled with Christ, and to know that this is what the Holy Spirit is working to do is great news for me. I can pray, "God, please make me thrilled with Christ" and I can know that to be a prayer He will gladly answer.

What else would you add?

- **What are some implications the quote suggests?**

First, to pray for this to happen. To ask God to do this in my life.

Second, to be aware, when I see this happening, that the Holy Spirit is at work in my life. (And who isn't grateful and glad when they see Him at work in their life?)

Third, to understand that growing in the Holy Spirit means growing in being thrilled with Christ. (That might be a different take on "growing in the Holy Spirit" than some have. Some may think it means more love or more power. It means those things, but those things take a back seat to Jesus.)

What else would you add?

- **Is this how the Church tends to think about the work of the Spirit? Why?**

I'm going to say, "No." I think the Church tends to think the main work of the Spirit is to help us cease from our sin, or to manifest Himself through us in miraculous ways. Those are things He does, of course they are, but I don't know that many Christians, if asked, would say the main work of the Holy Spirit is to thrill us with Christ. I think, once told that this is His primary work, that they would agree with it wholeheartedly, but I don't think they tend to think this way day in and day out.

I think the modern evangelical church thinks too much that the Holy Spirit exists for them, when He actually exists for the Father and the Son. His main goal is the glory of Christ, and when Christ is glorified, then the Father is glorified. Thus, the main goal of the Holy Spirit is the glory of God. He doesn't primarily exist to help me live my best life, or to live a fulfilling life, or to make my story the best it can be. He exists to make much of Jesus and to get me to the place of having the same goal as He does. He knows the best life possible is a life fully committed to the glory of God. Everything follows that primary life goal.

I wonder, do you all think similarly or differently?

Sent in Love

5. How might you live a little more this week with an expectation of the Spirit's empowering?

I am going to continue to pray daily for the Spirit's empowering and for an increased awareness of (1) His presence and (2) His guidance/direction through various sources, including the Bible.

How about you?