

**John 14:15-21**  
**“The Helper, the Spirit of Truth”**

**Introduction:**

When it comes to facing trials and suffering like we are now with Covid-19, people have various different responses, and I think we tend to fall into one of three different types.

The intellectual analyzer. This person keeps a cool head and tries to identify the cause of their problems through intellectual analysis. This kind of attitude is indispensable, however, this type often seems to fall into the pattern of blaming those around them for their suffering.

The emotional lamenter. This person seeks to overcome their trials through grieving and mourning from their heart. Getting swept up by their emotions, they can easily become very negative, however, they are great at empathizing with the suffering of those around them.

The forward charger. This person leaves their hardships in the past and quickly challenges ahead. This is a great attitude to have, but this type can also have a tendency not to take responsibility for their problems.

Which type do you identify with?

Today is Pentecost, when we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit, and it is also Grace City's 11th anniversary. God sent us his Spirit, who gives us comfort and encouragement and hope in the midst of our suffering. He is able to meet the unique needs of each of the types mentioned above. Today, let's look together at who the Holy Spirit is, and how he works among us.

**John 14:15-21**

*<sup>15</sup> “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, <sup>17</sup> 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.*

*<sup>18</sup> “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. <sup>19</sup> Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup> In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. <sup>21</sup> Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”*

First, let's talk about who the Holy Spirit is, his identity. Second, we'll consider the work of the Holy Spirit and what that looks like in our lives. Lastly, let's look at the kind of community that is built through the power of the Spirit.

## 1. Who is the Holy Spirit?

When it comes to the Holy Spirit, a really common question is “...What is it?” A lot of people say things like, “The Holy Spirit is so often talked about in the Bible, but it’s kind of unclear, honestly, I don’t really understand.” Our passage today introduces the Holy Spirit by calling him “another Helper.”

Along with Jesus, his Son, God sent us *another* Helper, the Holy Spirit, as an advocate. This way of referring to him makes it clear that he is equal with God the Father and with Jesus, and is, in fact, God himself. He interacts with us personally.

Therefore, the Holy Spirit is not merely the power, the work, or the ‘energy’ of God. He possesses all the divine qualities of God the Father and of Jesus the Son. He is omniscient, omnipotent, eternal, and unchanging, and since he is God, he should receive our worship, praise, and thanksgiving.

‘Helper’ in Greek means ‘one who is called to someone’s side.’ It also used to refer to a lawyer who appears on behalf of someone in court. This means the Holy Spirit is right beside you, advocating for you. Romans 8:16, 26.

*8:16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God...*

*8:26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.*

Actually, Jesus described the Holy Spirit to his disciples as a Helper as he was preparing to go to the cross, because he was about to leave them. Judas Iscariot already had it in his heart to betray Jesus. The disciples sensed the unsettled atmosphere and began to become anxious and afraid. For this reason Jesus promised not to “leave (them) as orphans” and assured them he would send them the Holy Spirit.

Especially in the last year, many people have experienced intensified loneliness and isolation. In our modern society, a person’s worth is largely determined by their performance and achievements at work. Because of this, we tend to obsess over our performance and accomplishments, our talents and skills, and by constantly comparing ourselves to those around us, we end up isolating ourselves.

“You see, loneliness is the price we have to pay for being born in this modern age, so full of freedom, independence, and our own egotistical selves.” Natsume Souseki, *Kokoro*

However, the Helper is "with you forever... he dwells with you and will be in you" (16-17). In essence, Christianity is not so much a doctrinal system as it is a living relationship with God, full of love and trust.

The Japanese word for religion, 'shuukyou,' is a relatively recent word, only about 150 years old, originating around the end of the Edo period as a translation for the word 'religion.' 'Religion' comes from the Latin term 'religio,' and it's thought that its root is 're-ligare,' meaning to 're-bind.' In other words, religion means to re-bind our relationship to God.

We have been joined together with God through the Holy Spirit. In Christ, we are led into a loving relationship with God, to live in new life with him.

*1 Corinthians 3:16.*

*3:16 Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?*

## **2. The Work of the Holy Spirit**

In the early days of Grace City, we invited some non-Christians to attend a Crossroads Bible Study that we held at a restaurant. A seeker in her late 20's, little by little, became open to hearing the message of the Bible. At one point she said, "I don't understand the Holy Spirit at all! I just don't get it." But after the study, she said with excitement, "I finally understand! The work of the Holy Spirit was to change my heart so I could trust in Jesus."

This story powerfully demonstrates the work of the Spirit, doesn't it? In verse 17, Jesus calls the Holy Spirit the Spirit of truth. The Spirit effectively communicates God's truth, the message of Christ's salvation, and changes our hearts to trust him. We believe the gospel and begin a new life through the power of the Holy Spirit.

*1 Corinthians 12:3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit.*

The Holy Spirit causes us to believe that we are loved by God, that Jesus is our savior, and that we are forgiven through Christ's death and resurrection. The Spirit leads us to repent of our faithless life apart from God, and turn our whole trajectory to walk in new life (which is a life in close relationship with God). Verse 20 describes the work of the Spirit in this way.

*14:20 In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.*

Isn't it hard to trust Christ and confess him as Lord? In the New Testament era, much the same as in modern Japan, it was really difficult and required a lot of courage to profess that Jesus is Savior and God. It was a dangerous thing to do in the polytheistic environments of Greece and Rome, and it was dangerous in monotheistic Jewish society

as well. In fact, it doesn't really matter what time period or society you are born into, we humans are hard-hearted from the start, and renewing our lives is never an easy thing to do.

So the most fundamental role of the Holy Spirit is to change our hearts, to lead us to repent from our sin and trust in Jesus. In the Bible, the concept of truth is linked to God himself and to Jesus, and without him, we cannot know what the truth is. The Holy Spirit reveals our self-centeredness and the idols that we worship. He shows us our sin, convicts our hearts, and leads us to turn to Jesus in humility. Mark 3:28-29.

*3:28 "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter,*

*3:29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"*

If your heart is inclined toward Jesus, you are already being led by the Holy Spirit. If you have come to earnestly think about the problem of your sin, and if you are wondering what you should do about it, the Holy Spirit is by your side. Don't ignore him! Instead, open your heart.

Whether you are a Christian or not, if you open your heart to the work of the Holy Spirit and let him guide you, Christ's lavish love and forgiveness and grace will be poured out on you. You will be accepted by God in Christ, you will become his child and able to exercise the bold privileges that come with that status.

### **3. A Holy Spirit Community**

The third and final point I'd like to stress is that, through the power of the Spirit, followers of Jesus begin to keep his commandments. In today's passage, loving Jesus and keeping his commandments are spoken about as parallel concepts.

*14:15 If you love me, you will keep my commandments...*

*14:21 Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.*

Before Jesus taught the disciples about the Holy Spirit in chapter 14, in chapter 13 he taught them to show love for each other by serving each other in humility, setting an example for them by washing their feet like a slave would. If you receive Christ's love, you must follow his example. After washing their feet, Jesus said this in John 13:34-35.

*13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.*

*13:35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*

If you receive the love of Jesus through the Holy Spirit, your life will become far from self-indulgent or oblivious to the needs of others. The love that the Holy Spirit gives is Christ's love, a love that serves through self-sacrifice. In the same way, our love for God compels us to prioritize him above ourselves and obey his commandments.

Our vision statement says, "Grace City is a gospel centered community. Our vision is, by making disciples of Christ, that Tokyo would be filled with God's grace." Sometimes it's been said that Grace City does a wonderful job emphasizing God's grace, but only a few people are truly becoming disciples of Jesus.

According to the Bible, those who come to love Jesus through the work of the Spirit will also keep the commandments that Jesus taught. As Jesus' disciples, we reveal the grace of God in the way we live. Of course, this isn't done out of obligation or compulsion! We are a community that loves and obeys Jesus with hearts of joy and gratitude.

C.S. Lewis said that God is like a drama or a dance, and faith is entering into that dance; and when we join God's dance, we finally discover true happiness.

"...in Christianity God is... Almost, if you will not think me irreverent, a kind of dance. ...The whole dance, or drama, or pattern of this three-Personal life is to be played out in each one of us: or (putting it the other way round) each one of us has got to enter that pattern, take his place in that dance. There is no other way to the happiness for which we were made."

*-Mere Christianity, pp.268,269*

The final thing I'd like to call us to is this. In the power of the Spirit, with increasing joy and love, let's obey God's commandments and build a community of love and trust. Not for our own satisfaction, although supreme happiness is certainly a byproduct, but for the purpose of displaying God's beauty and splendor, and so that others will come to know the good news of Jesus.

Who is the person you should get in contact with this week? Who is the person you should be praying for? We may not be able to get together in person right now, but how about an email or a text? Community group is also the perfect place to serve one another in love. Let's pray that the Holy Spirit will work powerfully among us.