

Holy Spirit and You

Advance in Faith 1 — Unit 3

Week 6 — Living in union with Holy Spirit



Introduction

The first three units of Advance in Faith focus on our relationship with God as three-in-one (trinity):¹

- a) Father Unit 101: God's great story
- b) Son Unit 102: Jesus, liberator and king
- c) Holy Spirit Unit 103: Holy Spirit and you

This one true God integrates us into his story. He created us. He redeemed us. He dwells among us. We are partners with him in his amazing restoration project—bringing the world back under his care.

Since we are partners with God in his big project, we are partners with each other. We share a unity with each other that is the result of our unity with God. The triune God is the source of that unity, a unity he has known for eternity.

In the TV series *Doctor Who*, the Doctor is said to be a time lord. Supposedly, he's the only one left of his kind, and the show often plays on that. He's all alone in the universe, with no partner, no one like him. The doctrine of the trinity assures us that God is not like that. Don't imagine a poor, lonely, God, with no one to relate to, forever alone! In his very essence, God is relational: he is love (1 John 4:8). He has always expressed himself in fellowship with the persons that exist within his unique being.

What can we learn from the relationships that exist within God? If we look at how Father, Son, and Holy Spirit treat each other, could we learn about our relationships with God and with each other?

The relationship between Father and Son

God is sovereign over the whole earth, even though the world rebelled against his authority and became enslaved to the powers of evil and death. So how does the Father rescue his world and bring it back under his authority? He sends the Prince—his Son—to retake authority over his realm, his world. The Prince of Heaven accepts the challenge and comes on a mission to restore his sovereign Father's authority over his rebellious realm.

In Jesus, therefore, we have the visible presence of the Father, the glorious King. The creative word who spoke the world into existence in the beginning becomes human and lives among us. For the first time since our world fell captive to the powers of sin and death, humanity experienced the glory of our heavenly ruler: in his Son:

¹ See <https://www.riverviewchurch.com.au/media/courses>

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus' mission is a) to reveal what kind of ruler his Father is, and b) to restore his rebellious and enslaved people into his care. So, the Son points us to the Father:

John 12 ⁴⁵ “The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me. . . . ⁴⁹ For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. ⁵⁰ I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.”

Jesus is the way we know what God is like. It is not the case that we knew all about God, and when Jesus showed up we went, “Ah, Jesus looks like God, so we'll put him in that category.” The problem was that the rebellious world did *not* know what our heavenly ruler was like, so when Jesus showed up, humanity went, “Huh? What's this? That doesn't look anything like what we expected God to be like!” It was through his Son (the Prince) that we came to understand our Father (our heavenly King).

Just look at the relationship between the Father and Son. With our insatiable quest for power, the world had already rejected our heavenly ruler long before Jesus was born, so naturally we rejected the Prince as well. Jesus expected to be rejected and dishonoured. He was treated as a traitor—as if guilty of treason against the powers that currently run the world. To keep their own power, they had to kill him and get him out of the way. So they crucified him, to publically humiliate him.

But the Son did not save his own face, or protect his own honour. He accepted the rejection, the humiliation, the condemnation by the world: he was acting for his Father's honour and not his own. He trusted his Father to restore his honour. Listen in on the conversation between Father and Son on the night before the Son's condemnation, humiliation, and death:

John 17 ¹ “Father, the hour has come. *Glorify your Son*, that your Son may *glorify you*. ² For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. ³ Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. ⁴ I have *brought you glory* on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. ⁵ And now, Father, *glorify me* in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.”

Father answered this prayer after Jesus' life was over. After his humiliation and death, Father vindicated him by raising him out of the grip of death, and giving him a name above every name. Every knee will bow to King Jesus! Every tongue will acknowledge his reign. The Son glorified the Father at the cost of his life, and the Father glorified the Son with the name, King of kings. He is the ruler who brings us back into the Father's care, as his domain (kingdom).

Is there something to learn here about not living to honour our own name, but living to honour the Father and the Son? Those who honour him, he will honour.

The relationship between Son and Holy Spirit

Before his death, Jesus promised not to leave his followers like orphans—as if they had no Father (John 14:18). He promised that Holy Spirit would come to be with them. Look at the way Jesus honours Holy Spirit: he actually tells the disciples they'll be better off with Holy Spirit than they were with him!

John 16:7 But very truly I tell you, it is *for your good* that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

In what sense were the disciples better off with Holy Spirit than with Jesus? In Jesus, God was present in a human body, so he could be in only one place at a time. When Jesus poured out Holy Spirit on all his followers, they all had God's presence with them at the same time, even though they were spread out across the Mediterranean region. The "body of Jesus" was no longer limited to one place at one time. We have Holy Spirit with us right now, unceasingly, in every setting, every aspect of life. Do you grasp that? We are better off with Holy Spirit than if Jesus was physically present!

But notice how Holy Spirit responds. Jesus said:

John 16 ¹² "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. ¹³ But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴ *He will glorify me* because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. ¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you."

According to Jesus, Holy Spirit doesn't go on about himself: he keeps drawing our attention to Jesus—the Prince who brings us back to the King (our Father). Holy Spirit delights in taking everything that belongs to the Father and making it known to his children.

Are you seeing a pattern here? The members of the trinity are not seeking their own glory. They work *to glorify each other, even when that means being shamed themselves!* That's so different from the way politicians and human authorities work: they always want photo opportunities, the moment that gives them recognition.

Joining the dance

Humans search for God, and we discover that God became human to live among us (Jesus). The Son draws us to the Father, at the cost of his own life. Then the Father and the Spirit raise him from the dead and honour him with a name above every name. Since the Son ascended to the Father, the Father and the Son pour out the Spirit. The Spirit exalts Jesus as Lord of all, including us into the Messiah so that we can function as Jesus' body in his world—doing what the Head wants, bringing glory to the Father, honouring him as the most amazing and gracious sovereign. These are the best dance moves ever!

As soon as you look at one, they draw your attention to the others. We are drawn into their amazing dance. Holy Spirit draws us into this dance with Jesus. We become his bride—dancing with our groom. All of life becomes a dance with the Prince of Heaven. We find ourselves doing things that are far beyond our own ability. We cease living for ourselves. Our life does not consist of seeking honour or accumulating riches or being pampered with pleasure. Instead, we find fulfilment in dancing with Jesus.

Look at Jesus, and you see Father. Jesus defined himself as *the one sent by the Father*. That's who he was, his identity. You hear him say this incessantly (John 4:34; 5:23-24, 30, 37; 6:38-39, 44; 7:16-18, 28, 33; 8:16, 18, 26, 29; 9:4; 12:44-45, 49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5). Then Jesus says, “You know all this you've heard me say about Father sending me? Well, *in just the same way, I'm sending you*” (20:21).

So who are we? We are the people *sent by Jesus*. We represent the Prince on earth, just as he represented his Father the heavenly ruler. That is our identity, our purpose in his world. Just as Holy Spirit empowered Jesus to represent his Father, Holy Spirit empowers us to represent the resurrected life of King Jesus:

John 20 ²¹ Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

Conclusion

Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead.

Holy Spirit raises us from dead humanity.

He is the breath of Jesus' resurrection life in us.

He forms us together into the body of Jesus—the body animated by Jesus' Spirit.

The Father is restoring his realm, through his Son (the agent of the Father). The Son rescues us from the power of sin and death, sending us with the power of his Spirit. The Spirit leads us into this dance.

So, keep step with the Spirit! It's what we were born to do.

Group Prayer

Tonight we're using our group time to pray for each other. Holy Spirit wants to empower you to serve Jesus our Leader, so we're going to make ourselves available to him, to receive his gifts and empowering.

What would you like us to pray for? Is there something specific you would like to receive? Sensitivity to people? Sensitivity to what Holy Spirit is saying?

Briefly discuss what you would like prayer for. Then spend the time praying together. Set aside every other goal and desire. Open your whole being to Holy Spirit. Pray for each other to be filled with Holy Spirit afresh. Expect him to empower you to be the living expression of our Lord (Acts 1:8). Expect to receive Holy Spirit's gifts so you can express how Jesus' loves his people.

Memory Work

John 20:21-22 (NIV)

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."
And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Take Home Exercise

Join in the dance with Holy Spirit.

For 1400 years, the church has used the image of a dance to describe the way the persons of the trinity treat each other. In the seventh century, John of Damascus used the Greek word *perichoresis*. It describes “a relationship of mutuality in which persons draw their identity from being related to others. It is an ecstatic dance in which the trinitarian persons literally ‘stand outside themselves’ as they evoke the life of the divine counterparts.”²

Let Holy Spirit draw you into this communion within God, stirring in your heart what he is wants you to do. Listen to his voice: it will be unique as you.

Michele Perry felt Holy Spirit calling her to represent Jesus to the Sudan—an unsafe, war-torn country. It wasn’t a safe choice: she was born with only one leg, so she couldn’t run when terrorists turned up with AK47 rifles. She had to rely on Holy Spirit as to what to say. You can read her biography: *Love Has a Face: Mascara, a Machete and One Woman’s Miraculous Journey with Jesus in Sudan*.

She describes the way that Jesus called her to this work years before, while she was taking a flight elsewhere:

About thirty minutes into the two-hour flight I was enjoying His presence when suddenly the roof of the plane appeared to vanish above me in a spiraling whirlwind. Now, being on an airplane and watching the roof above you disappear is slightly unnerving. I looked around me and rapidly ascertained that no one else was alarmed. *It must be one of those God things peculiar to me!* I thought.

I then was whisked into an encounter where Jesus and I danced on the crystal sea. I was no longer wearing my jeans and sweater but was clothed in a lovely, white ball gown, and Jesus was wearing His royal robes, every inch the King of kings. He walked up to me and asked, “May I have this dance?”

Instantly I was caught up in a whirling waltz where the scenery around me spun by out of the corner of my eye. It spun faster and faster until it was transformed and we were dancing in the slums and leper colonies of South Asia, then the garbage dumps of Africa, in refugee camps and red light districts. Jesus and I were dancing wherever lives had been broken and tossed aside. And in each place we danced, the river of life flowed and the landscape was transformed.

The place that stands out the most in my memory of that encounter is the garbage dump. As Jesus and I danced in that dump, a river sprang up from beneath the mounds of rubbish and began to wash the land clean. As it touched the people, their bloated bellies became flat and their sores disappeared. I will never forget those images.

² Molly T. Marshall, *Joining the Dance: A Theology of the Spirit* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2003), 7.

Recently I had to go to Juba on business. Juba is the seat of governmental affairs for southern Sudan, about a seven-hour drive north of Yei. On our return trip home, our route required us to drive through the Juba dump.

Five miles outside of the city center overflowing mounds of decaying garbage lined the road. Flies swarmed so thickly that if you opened your mouth you were likely to have two or three visitors. The dump lined the road for almost two and a half miles. Periodically we saw pockets of children and families scavenging for scraps to eat.

As we entered the dump I realized I had seen this place before. This was one of the trash heaps upon which Jesus and I had danced in my vision years before! I was so shocked I was not sure what to do with the revelation. His tangible presence began to fill our Land Rover. John, one of the pastors traveling with us, leaned over the seat and tapped my shoulder.

“Mama, should we stop and preach?”

“Yes! Peter, stop the car!”

Peter, our driver, brought the car to a halt, and John and I leapt out onto a pile of rotting refuse. The crowd of forty to fifty people raiding the latest dump deliveries looked up from their scavenging to see what the commotion was all about as the little white woman with one leg began to shout, “Good news! We are here to bring you a message of good news!”

Their curiosity got the better of them, and they put down their trash to come over and watch this spectacle in the dump. Soon John and I were surrounded by a crowd in black rags with sores on their skin. As I held the children who were eating maggot-laden food and told them of God’s love for them amidst the swarms of flies, His love washed over us all. Heaven descended into that dump. Every person there prayed to receive Jesus. Not one turned Him down. Not one. And they asked us to come back. Blessed are the poor in spirit, the ones who know their need, for theirs is the Kingdom.³

³ Michele Perry, *Love Has a Face: Mascara, a Machete and One Woman’s Miraculous Journey with Jesus in Sudan* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen, 2009).