

Speaker 1: [00:11](#) Hello and welcome to this episode of the St Andrew's Enfield podcast with me, Steve Griffiths. Today we're going to be thinking about the Holy Spirit and our relationship with him. Uh, now I have to say at the beginning, that as the months and the years go by, there's probably going to be lots of podcast episodes from me about the Holy Spirit because it's just too big a topic to cover in one episode. So I'm not going to try to cover the whole issue today, but just to give some initial thoughts from a passage that I've been reading quite a lot lately, which is from John's Gospel, Chapter Fourteen, verses 15 to 21. And it's an important topic, I think, because there are many Christians like me who really struggle to get our heads around who the Holy Spirit is and how we should relate to him and what difference the Holy Spirit can actually make in our lives.

Speaker 1: [01:13](#) As Christians, we worship one God who reveals himself in three Persons. He reveals himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and of all these three Persons, the Holy Spirit might be the hardest for us to grasp. We often have a picture in our head of God the Father, because we have earthly fathers as a sort of model for how a heavenly Father might be or might not be. We have a picture in our head of God the Son, because Jesus was fully human. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have all these wonderful stories about Jesus that we know from the gospels in the Bible. But God, the Holy Spirit, we don't really have a physical image of this that we can draw on in our imaginations. God the Holy Spirit can often seem too abstract, too conceptual for us to imagine. And if that's the case, then how are we to interact with God as Holy Spirit? But whilst that is undoubtedly true, Jesus did speak of the Holy Spirit in very concrete terms actually, in terms of what the Holy Spirit will do in our lives. So in this podcast today, we're thinking about who is the Holy Spirit and why is he important to us?

Speaker 1: [02:44](#) Well, as I mentioned, the passage that I've been thinking about recently is from John Chapter 14, and it comes from the Last Supper at which Jesus is preparing his disciples for his departure. And um, he's been telling his disciples that the time has come for him to leave them. But he's saying that they don't need to be despondent about that because God will still be with them just in a different form through the Holy Spirit. And that's true for us today, of course. Jesus is no longer here. He returned to heaven at the ascension. Jesus has gone. He doesn't live in our hearts like some Christians tend to believe. He's in heaven where he is constantly praying for us. But the absence of Jesus in our lives doesn't mean the absence of God in our lives because God is still with us through his Holy Spirit. In many churches, including the Church of England in which I'm a priest,

Speaker 1: [03:46](#) Uh, we proclaim that truth at the start of our Communion Prayer, what we call our Eucharistic Prayer, where I say, "the Lord is here" and the congregation replies, "his Spirit is with us". God is here. He is ever-present in our lives through his Holy Spirit. As Jesus embodied God during his time on earth, bringing comfort and help and guidance and healing to the people that he met, so God is embodied to us in the here and now through his Holy Spirit; bringing us comfort and help and guidance and healing. So we can be confident in God's presence with us always. And we do, I think, need to be absolutely sure that the Holy Spirit is God with us. The Holy Spirit is not the spirit of life within each one of us. The Holy Spirit is not the human spirit striving to be the best it can. The Holy Spirit isn't the divine spark within us that empowers our soul.

Speaker 1: [04:57](#) The Holy Spirit is the embodiment of God, dwelling within each one of us who have become united with Christ through our salvation. So the Holy Spirit then is not an 'it'. Traditionally, we use the word 'he' for the Holy Spirit, but 'she' would be equally okay because in the Greek, the word used is actually a neuter. It's neither male nor female, so either 'he' or 'she' is equally right and, uh, equally wrong as well because the Holy Spirit is the person of God, not an 'it', uh, but beyond gender. And the Holy Spirit is not just with us. He is in us. The Holy Spirit actually physically dwells within us. As Jesus said in verse 17 of John Chapter 14, "you know him because he abides with you and he will be in you." So the Holy Spirit is God physically within us. And if God dwells within us, then surely we should notice some difference in our lives, which is what we're going to think about in this podcast.

Speaker 1: [06:19](#) The first difference that the Holy Spirit brings to us when he dwells within us is that, as time goes by, we grow in the Fruit of the Spirit. And you might remember these from Paul's letter to the Galatians, Chapter Five, verse 22 and 23 where Paul writes this, he says, "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control." These are the characteristics that the Holy Spirit places within us and increasingly should become the governing principles through which we live our lives. The more we come to rely on the Holy Spirit in our lives, the more the fruit of the Spirit should grow within us. That's not to say that our lives always reflect these characteristics. If we're honest, we recognize that sometimes you know, we just aren't as kind as we should be. We're not always loving towards others. We may not be as gentle as we could be. All of us fall short of these ideals in our lives on occasions, but, but generally speaking, as we see the map of our lives unfold, so these character traits

become more representative of who we are and how we interact with other people. The fruit of the Spirit grows within our lives and eventually blossoms within us.

Speaker 1: [08:06](#) The second way in which the Holy Spirit makes a difference in our lives is that as time goes by, we learn to exercise our spiritual gifts. Now we will have a podcast, or more than one podcast, devoted specifically to this issue in the future, but the spiritual gifts, uh, but for now those gifts that the Holy Spirit gives us, which is different from our natural talents. These are the gifts that are given to us to help us grow his church. And in the Bible there are 27 gifts of the Spirit listed. And all of us who are Christians have one or more of these gifts. And as we discover what these gifts are, so our ministry in the Church strengthens and so the church grows. So the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit are the two primary ways in which the Holy Spirit is at work within us to transform us into the people God has created us to be and to strengthen us for his ministry in the church.

Speaker 1: [09:26](#) So then the Holy Spirit is God present with us in the here and now, transforming us and growing us so that we can be a blessing to others and a blessing to the world. Someone once described the Holy Spirit as "the present tense of God". I like that. He's not the God of history, he's not the God of the future, but the God of the here and now, active in the world and active in our lives. The Holy Spirit is the one who helps us to experience God on a day by day basis. The one who gives us faith, the one who sustains us, the one who keeps us in the presence of God, every moment of every day. The Holy Spirit is God present with us in our baptism. The Holy Spirit is God present with us as we share Holy Communion together. The Holy Spirit is God present with us as the Word of God is spoken to us through the sermon and through the Bible readings in our worship services. The Holy Spirit is God with us in the church as a Christian community, empowering us and growing us in the faith. And as the Holy Spirit increasingly dictates our life, so we will increasingly become obedient to God's will for our lives. And that's what we read in this passage, uh, from John's Gospel in chapter 14 where Jesus says this, he says, "if you love me, you'll keep my commandments. Those who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me, and those who love me will be loved by my Father."

Speaker 1: [11:28](#) Now I think this is a really interesting question actually: do you love Jesus? You love Jesus? Now, for many of us, myself included, actually, this is not an obvious question to answer. I know what it feels like to love my parents. I know what it feels

like to love my wife and my family. I know what it feels to love my friends. I can describe those feelings to you. But to be honest, I don't know what it feels like to love Jesus. When I think of Jesus, I don't get warm, fuzzy feelings towards him. The thought of Jesus doesn't give me butterflies in my tummy. The truth is, for me at least, that loving Jesus is not described or experienced as a sentiment or an emotion. It's a different kind of love than that which I have for other people. Maybe that's the same for you too.

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If I asked you, do you love Jesus? you may doubt your love for him because you can't describe it in terms of emotions or sentiments. But fortunately that's not the kind of love that Jesus wants from us. When it comes to love, Jesus doesn't want warm sentiments. He wants obedience. When it comes to love, Jesus doesn't particularly want our feelings so much as our actions. When it comes to love, Jesus doesn't want so much our emotion as our devotion. Notice what Jesus says here in this passage from John's Gospel. He says, "if you love me, you will keep my commandments." So love for Jesus isn't really about our emotions. Love for Jesus is about following his call on our lives and living in obedience to him. Authentic love for Jesus is shown by how we live for him and how we live with each other.

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So if you don't feel anything for Jesus, it doesn't mean that you don't love him. If you're trying to be obedient to his will for your life, then that is really the only expression of love that Jesus wants from you. Love for Jesus may begin with emotion, but as it deepens, it moves through to obedience and devotion. And that I think is how it should be. But how do we obey Jesus? How do we live a life of devotion to him? Well, surely we can't do it in our own strength because none of us are capable of doing that ourselves, because all of us are spiritually weak. So instead, we have to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit at work within us; changing us, transforming us, drawing us closer to God. And the more that we let go of our own lives, the more that we allow God to work in us,

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the more devoted to Jesus we become. The more we stop trying to control our lives, and the more we hand over that control to the Holy Spirit within us, the more obedient to Jesus we become. So ultimately then, the experience of the Holy Spirit within us is the absolute foundation of our experience as Christians. The Holy Spirit leads us into a relationship with God. The Holy Spirit gives us spiritual gifts to use in the ministry of God. The Holy Spirit grows good fruit in us to help us become the people that we would destined to be. The Holy Spirit leads us into a obedience, which is how we express devotion to Jesus.

The Holy Spirit in our lives is actually the only way that we can live out our calling as Christians. And the more we allow the Holy Spirit to work within us, the more we will know what it is to have life in all its fullness within the love of God.

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And that's why Jesus had to say to his disciples, even though they didn't understand him, uh, he said to them in John Chapter Sixteen, he said, "it is to your advantage that I go away for if I do not go away, the Spirit will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you." Jesus is no longer here. He's gone. He's left us. Praise God for that, because if Jesus were still here with us, we would not know the power of the Spirit in our lives and we wouldn't know what it is to live the Christian life. The Lord is here, his Spirit is with us. And that is really, really good news for all of us. That is the foundation of our experience of God in the here and the now. So the task and the challenge for each one of us, I think, is to learn to rely more and more on the Spirit of God in our lives so that we can draw closer to God and reflect his love to the world by obeying the commandment to love.

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Now, there is an awful lot more to be said about the Holy Spirit in our lives. And as I said earlier, we will come back to this topic again, probably many times, in the future through these podcasts. But for today, we pray that God's Spirit will become more evident in our lives through the fruit of the Spirit, through the gifts of the Spirit, through his empowering of us. So that we can become more obedient to the commandments of Jesus to love. So thanks for listening to this podcast today. I hope it's been helpful. It's one of those topics, isn't it? The doctrine of the Holy Spirit, which can sometimes leave us feeling a little bit confused. So, uh, um, I hope that's been a helpful, perhaps, introduction and given you something, and given you something to think and pray about. If you've got any questions that have arisen from today or you want to continue the conversation with me, then please feel free to email me, [steve.griffiths@london.anglican.org](mailto:steve.griffiths@london.anglican.org). And check out the website for the Church [standrewsenfield.com](http://standrewsenfield.com), our Facebook page St Andrew's Enfield. Please do subscribe to these podcasts and of course tell other people about them as well so that we can continue to grow, uh, as a community, in our knowledge and our experience of the love of God. So thanks for listening. Wherever you are today, I hope that you have a blessed and peaceful day and a deep experience of God's Spirit in your life. Bye.