

“Download God’s Power Here”

Genesis 1:1-3; Ezekiel 36:25-27; John 3:3-8; Acts 1:8

Series: Recharge: Plug into the Power of the Spirit Week 2. The Person of the Spirit

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Some years ago my cell phone was dying a slow death. I couldn’t recharge it. I plugged it in all night, but it was still half-strength. With each recharge it got weaker. Finally, the dreaded red line appeared with the warning: low battery. Frantically I rushed it to the emergency room – the Apple Store. I expected the guy to swing into action, call in a team of experts stat, hook it up to monitors, and fill it with antibiotics to kill all computer viruses. He didn’t. Instead, he took out a metal toothpick, stuck it in the recharging slot and pulled out a big hairball of lint - enough to knit a sweater. “That’s your problem,” he said. “Oh” I said. All that lint from my pocket blocked the power.

What’s blocking the power of God in your life? In our series *Recharge: Plug into the Power of the Spirit*, we are learning how Jesus puts His presence and power in His followers through the Holy Spirit. God wants to download the power of the Holy Spirit into you. To understand how God recharges you let’s first ask: Who is the Holy Spirit?

To begin with, the Holy Spirit is our **Creator**. One question I often hear is, “Where was the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament?” He was in the beginning.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. (Genesis 1:1-3)

In these verses we see the Father, the Son or Word of God (symbolized by God speaking, “Let there be light”) and the Holy Spirit – the whole Trinity – creating all things together.

This leads us to the second truth: the Holy Spirit is **God** - the third person of the Trinity. We don’t worship three gods but one God revealed in three persons. This is why Jesus tells us to baptize “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). One Name – Yahweh – three persons. This is why Paul ends 2 Corinthians the same way we end every service, “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13:14). God above us, God with us, God in us. The Trinity may be hard to comprehend in your mind but not hard to experience. God is all around us and in us.

Third, the Spirit is **Almighty**. Like the Father and the Son, the Spirit possesses the power of God. This is probably a good time to clear up a misconception – the Holy Spirit is not a ghost. Yes the Apostles’ Creed says, “I believe in the Holy Ghost” but that’s just an old term for Spirit. It doesn’t mean the Spirit is a cousin of Caspar the friendly ghost. He’s not afraid of the ghostbusters. The Spirit is Almighty God.

Fourth: The Spirit is not a force, the Force or an “It.” The Spirit is a **Person** equal to the Father and the Son, a Person with thoughts, feelings and will, a Person who relates to us. You can talk to the Spirit, pray to and through the Spirit, work with the Spirit.

In both Hebrew and Greek, the word for Spirit is “wind.” In Greek the word is “pneuma” (nooma) which we use to describe anything that uses wind power: pneumatic jackhammers, vacuum cleaners, pipe organs, nail guns. My wife did not want me to have a nail gun. She’s afraid I’ll scratch my head and nail myself to the wall. Those, however, are mere child’s play compared to the power of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not the wind. The Holy Spirit, along with the Father and the Son, created the wind and every other force in nature. The Spirit is stronger than any nor’easter.

Early on the morning of Sunday, March 13 I drove to church, tried to turn the corner out by our sign...and couldn’t. Traffic cones blocked off Edgewood Road on both ends. There was no way to get in our parking lot and building. I thought, “Oh no! First covid and now this! No worship at Woodside this Sunday!” What did I do? I drove around the cones. Then I discovered the cause. For decades, an enormous pine tree soared over the original Woodside chapel across the street. Now, strong winds felled this glorious fir bringing down the power lines with it. And the question on everyone’s lips: Which way did it fall? Did it hit the chapel? Thankfully it missed the church completely.

The wind fell on the tree not the church. The wind of the Holy Spirit falls on the Church – you and me. The Holy Spirit wants to make a pneumatic you – a Spirit powered, Spirit driven you. Why? So you can clear obstacles larger than that pine tree. The Spirit enters each of you. In the Old Testament the Spirit entered some people – prophets, priests, kings – at certain times for a specific purpose. After Jesus’ ascension, the Spirit comes to all who believe in Jesus. On Pentecost, a small congregation is holding a prayer meeting when a loud and raucous nor’easter descends on them.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. (Acts 2:1-2)

The wind falls on the Church in a room not much bigger than our chapel. They are not priests, prophets, kings or rabbis. They are not powerful or popular. All of them are filled with the Holy Spirit. And Jesus wants to fill you too. If Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit lives in you. And what does the Holy Spirit do?

The one who made the Creation wants to make you a **New Creation**. God promised to do this through the Old Testament Prophet Ezekiel.

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. (Ezekiel 36:25-27)

This is fulfilled in the New Testament.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The forceful winds of winter storms, like the one which toppled that tree, leave destruction. The forceful winds of the Holy Spirit bring a beautiful new creation. Your heart may be hardened by too much hurt, calloused by too much doubt, chained by too much addiction, broken by too much rejection, strained by too much stress, stained by too much mess. It doesn't matter: the Spirit can make you a new creation. He takes out even hearts of stone, gives you a fresh, clean, pure heart and He fills it with Himself. How do you download the power to be a new creation? Get rid of the lint of false idols and impurities in your life. They are blocking the power of the Spirit.

The Spirit also gives you a **New Birth**.

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." (John 3:3-8)

The Holy Spirit gives you a second birth – not a physical birth but a spiritual birth. You are born into God's family; you become a child of God. I know so many who don't feel at home in their physical family, their family of origin. Too many of their troubles are traced back to a difficult relationship with their Dad or Mom or both. You can judge them, blame them, avoid them, rebel against them. It does no good. Every parent is imperfect. Some parents are cruel and abusive. Most do the best they can. Yet here is the good news: You have a Father in heaven who loves you perfectly, graciously, endlessly. The Spirit issues a birth certificate with your name and God's name on it. You are not perfect the minute you enter His family. But the Spirit gives you the place where you can grow in grace, where you can develop a family resemblance to Jesus.

Third, the Spirit gives us a **New Purpose**. When PECO came to restore the power lines the tree took down across the street they turned off our power before the Higher Ground Service. I was about to alert everyone on Facebook by saying: "The Church Has No Power." Then I stopped. That wouldn't sound good. Thankfully the power came on before Higher Ground. Sadly this is too true today. Why? We've lost our purpose. Jesus says the power of the Holy Spirit will come on you and you will...make new members? No. Build big sanctuaries? No. Fill worship services? No. Start denominations? No. All good stuff. Nothing wrong with any of it. But they are not the purpose. The Holy Spirit gives us power so we will be witnesses to Jesus, make disciples of Jesus (Matthew 28:19), tell others about Jesus through our words and actions. Jesus says,

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

These were Jesus' final words before He ascended to heaven. Ten days later, on the Day of Pentecost, the power of the Holy Spirit came upon that tiny congregation. Peter preached the Good News about Jesus and three thousand people became disciples in one day. Why don't we experience the full power of the Holy Spirit? We keep it to ourselves. We do not witness to Jesus. We do not make disciples. What good is the air hose if it does not fill up the tire? What good is the helium tank if it does not fill up the balloon? What good is the oxygen mask

if it does not fill the lungs and give life? If you want to receive the full power of the Holy Spirit it can't stop with you. Let it flow.

So I have two questions for you. What Lint blocks the power of the Spirit in your life? Anger, Anxiety or Addiction? Insecurity, Indifference or an Idol? Resentment, Regret, Rebellion? Self-pity, Self-indulgence, Selfishness? Let the Spirit clear and cleanse you of all unhealthy lint so His power can flow in.

What prevents the power of the Spirit from flowing out? Jesus gives you the Spirit so you will be His witness in ever increasing circles: Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. With whom can you share God's love and truth in each of these circles? Who is your Jerusalem, those who are close to you, family and friends? Who is your Judea – people you work with, neighbors and community members? Who is your Samaria – people who are different than you? Who can you share the Gospel with who is far from you – perhaps through the internet, social media, or your mission giving.

Have you helped someone find their way back to God and believe in Jesus in the last year? Have you invited someone outside Woodside to worship or your growth group in the last year? Has your growth group started another growth group in the last year? God wants more people in His family.

Frank rejected God. He ran from his parents. He was a rebel. As a teen he was kicked out school for drinking and defying authority.

I believed in God. I just didn't want Jesus running my life. I wanted to run my own life. But I was miserable. I got my thrills and identity from challenging the system. The more I tried to fill my life with things I thought would make me happy, the more empty I felt inside. I realized for the first time that sin had control over my life and there was absolutely nothing I could do in my own power to overcome it. Suddenly, I had an overpowering conviction that I needed to get my life right with God. I was sick and tired of being sick and tired. My years of running and rebellion had ended. It was finished. The rebel had found the cause.

At the age of 22 Frank gave his life to Jesus Christ and was born anew. Frank - Franklin Graham – is the son of the Rev. Dr. Billy Graham – the one who helped more people be born again than anyone else in history. His once rebellious son Franklin now leads Samaritan's Purse and Operation Christmas Child. He brings the power of the Holy Spirit, in word and deed, to millions. Franklin carries on his evangelistic mission not because he is the son of Billy Graham but because he is the son of Almighty God through the new birth of the Holy Spirit.

Download the power of the Holy Spirit and let it flow through you.