

CGH Holy Spirit Study

Life Giving Spirit

In The Lutheran Difference (TLD) the opening of this section states:

Although it is sometimes assumed that the Holy Spirit was not introduced until Pentecost, the opening verses of Scripture remind us that He was present even at the time of creation. Although we read in Genesis 2:7 that God breathed into man “the breath of life,” the translators of both the Hebrew language of the Old Testament and the Greek language of the New Testament often use breath and spirit interchangeably.

Gen 1:2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

Gen 2:7 then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

Questions:

1. Does this change your perception of the Holy Spirit?
2. Have you considered the life-giving aspect of the Spirit? In what way(s)?
3. What does this tell us about how we were created?

TLD: Although God breathed the Spirit into man at his creation, man did not long maintain his holy and “spiritual” status. In the Garden of Eden man fell, and all since have been born in a “natural” or “fleshly,” that is, sinful, state.

Gen 3:8-9 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. (9) But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”

4. What happened to humanity after the fall?
5. What was the result of this for all future generations?
6. What is our fate now versus God’s original intent?
7. In the above Genesis passage why do you think God asked, “where are you?”

Being dead in trespasses (Ephesians 2:1), the sinner must be reborn or re-created if he or she is to have life. Creation—that which God alone can do—is precisely what must take place. Men who are dead in sin must be brought to life, created anew.

8. How are we reborn or “born again?”
9. What does this mean for us as Lutherans?
10. How does this concept of “born again” differ among the different denominations?
11. What role do we play in this rebirth?

Eph 2:1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins

Joh 3:5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Rom 8:11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

Tit 3:4-7 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, (5) he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, (6) whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, (7) so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

TLD: Points to remember: The life of Jesus, the life given into death for our sins, is the one and only basis for our salvation. The Holy Spirit makes the benefits of Christ's work our own. Acting through Word and Sacraments, the Spirit testifies to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, we are not burdened with the misconception of worship as a good work that must be done to please God. Instead, we gather to hear the reassuring promise of eternal life granted in Jesus' name. We come to receive life in His Word and Sacraments. And we come to offer our praise and thanksgiving for this wonderful, free, certain gift of God. We can respond to a friend who believes that one must "make a decision" or otherwise work with the Spirit in salvation that, just as Adam did not choose to be created and we do not cooperate in our birth, neither do we have the option of taking part in our own rebirth.

12. In what way does the Holy Spirit make the benefits of Christ's work our own?
13. Do we see worship as a "have to" or a "get to?"
14. How do you see worship as it relates to the Holy Spirit? Is it an opportunity to receive forgiveness through word and sacrament? An opportunity for evangelism? Both? Neither?

COMPARISON

Eastern Orthodox: "Is the Holy Ghost communicated to men even now likewise? He is communicated to all true Christians.... How may we be made partakers of the Holy Ghost? Through fervent prayer, and through the Sacraments" (The Longer Catechism of the Eastern Church, questions 249–50).

Lutheran: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith" (SC II; Concordia, p. 330; Lutherans emphasize that the Holy Spirit works through the Means of Grace: the Word and Sacraments).

Reformed: “But when God accomplishes His good pleasure in the elect, or works in them true conversion, He not only causes the gospel to be externally preached to them, and powerfully illuminates their minds by His Holy Spirit … but by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit He pervades the inmost recesses of the man” (Canons of the Synod of Dort, article 11).

Roman Catholic: The Holy Spirit awakens faith in unbelievers and communicates new life to them through the ministry of the Church. **Anabaptist:** This movement emphasizes the mystical work of the Spirit in the heart rather than through Word and Sacraments. Only holy people have received the Holy Spirit and are members of the Church.

Baptist: “We believe that Repentance and Faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God” (New Hampshire Baptist Confession).

Wesleyan: “But as soon as he is born of God … he is now capable of hearing the inward voice of God, saying, ‘Be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee’; ‘Go and sin no more.’ … He ‘feels in his heart,’ to use the language of our Church, ‘the mighty working of the Spirit of God’” (Standard Sermons of John Wesley, 39.4).

15. What thoughts do you have in looking at the comparisons of different denominations?