

STUDY GUIDE: Week #2

I'm In <3 | The Gospel of the Holy Spirit

September 14-20, 2013

This fall we will be going through a seven week sermon series based on Pastor Bruce's new book, "I'm In <3," in which he challenges us "to know the deep intimate love of God through the person of the Holy Spirit."

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 of the book begins with the thought that *"Luke fell in love with the Spirit before he became a follower of Jesus. His Book of Acts is the clearest declaration of love for the Spirit found anywhere in scripture. Luke was enraptured by the Spirit. He was dazzled by the Spirit's obvious pleasure at playfully surprising people with joy. He was impressed at the Spirit's big view of a world restored to beauty. He watched in wonder as people beyond medical help were healed by the Spirit."*

CHAT

Bruce said in his message that Luke met the Spirit first: *He became so enamored of the Spirit's work through the Christians that he wanted to know more about Jesus."*

- Looking back at your own story, do you see a pattern of God working in your life? Share some of the ways in which you began to understand and experience God.
- Which person of the Trinity do you resonate with the most? Why?
- Some have described the relationships within the Trinity in this way: The Spirit points to the Son and the Son points to the Father. Together they (God) ARE love, a divine relational dance that we are invited into. In which order have you experienced the Father, Son, and Spirit?

READ & DISCUSS

Read Acts 2:38-39; Acts 19:1-5; Acts 22:2-8

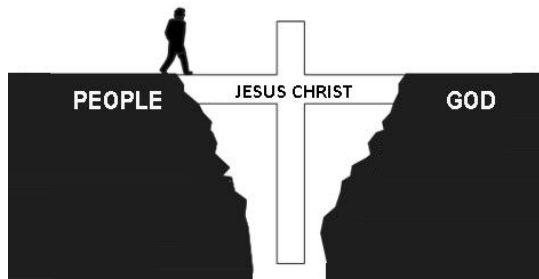
- In what order do the members of the Trinity appear in these stories?
- Do you think there is the normative pathway that people experience in coming to know the triune God?
- How does this fit with your own story?

Read I John 4:19; Psalm 139:13-16 Ephesians 2:4-5; 8-9

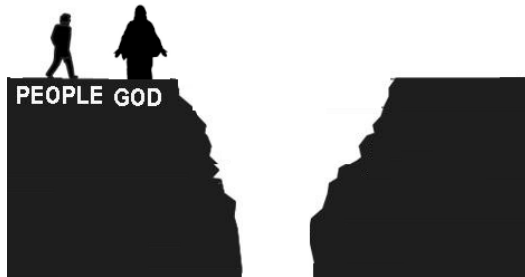
- How do these scriptures show God's initiation towards us?

Theologians use a phrase, "*prevenient grace*" to describe this:

The word prevenient comes from the Latin verb praeveni (prae, before + venio, come). The Latin is the basis for the English word prevent, which used to have the meaning of "precede." Literally, then, prevenient or preventing grace is understood to be grace that precedes or comes before salvation. More properly, it precedes any human decision in regard to salvation. Augustine (354-430BC) argued that because man is a totally depraved sinner, God must initiate the process of salvation.



At the left is an illustration of a way of understanding the gospel just read in the Ephesians scripture, 2:4-5; 8-9, showing Jesus bridging the gap between us and God.



What contrast with that understanding do you see in the second illustration? Is it possible that the Spirit has been at work in advance of your realization that there is a Creator God, an understanding the work of Jesus at the cross, and your ongoing surrender and growth into becoming more and more like Jesus?

- When did the miracle of faith happen for you? Was there a point in time you can look back to? Where might you now recognize the work of the Holy Spirit ahead of your awareness?

APPLY

I John 4:13-16 says: *“This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.”*

Take some time this week to look back over your life, note the big, little, and surprising ways in which God has been wooing you all along. May your heart well up with joy when you take the time to see and thank Him for what he’s been up to in your story!

Luke 10:21 *“At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.”*

CLOSE IN PRAYER

