

Week One To You From Dad

Dads don't have to be great shoppers to know a good kids' gift when they see one. It really only takes about three ingredients:

You have to know what your children like. Some of them are crazy about anything with butterflies on it, or baseball, or blue to go with their eyes.

You have to know what they already have. If you're not sure which movies or video games they already own, you'll be going back to stand in the return line.

You also have to know what they need. The wrong gift can feed a bad habit or breed arguments at home over rights and privileges. Gift-giving does carry some responsibility.

But one thing's for sure, father-to-child gifts are far and away the most fun to give. And when your heavenly Father saw what you liked, saw what you had, and saw what you needed, he gave you his Spirit – to satisfy all three longings at the same time.

Read John 14:15-18, 22-26

The Holy Spirit is indeed a hard part of the Godhead to grasp. Though he's every bit as divinely eternal as the Father and Son, we tend to think of him as a New Testament invention, dormant until he made his famously fiery entrance at Pentecost.

But how much earlier than the second verse of the Bible does he have to appear before we get the message that he has always existed—before light and dark, before day and night, before trees and flowers, “hovering over the surface of the waters” (Gen 1:2).

When the children of Israel were coming to flower in the early dawn of civilization, even then the Father had “put His Holy Spirit among the flock” (Isaiah 63:11), shepherding them through grasslands and desert, through successes and failures, keeping his followers prospering and protected.

He was still walking among his people at the turn of a new era, somehow depositing a seed of deity into the womb of a young virgin girl, continuing to exhibit his presence in ways that had never ceased to amaze.

So we shouldn't restrict the Holy Spirit to our own stretch of history, as if we possess in him a share of God not available to millennia past. The Spirit has always been man's sense of the presence of God. He has always been on equal footing in the Trinity.

Young and Old

And yet the arrival of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 did fulfill a profound aspect of God's eternal plan—to “pour out” his Spirit on us in a manner that would cement what Christ had accomplished on Earth. In so doing, the Spirit energized a rough-hewn band of followers—believers who knew that something life altering had happened to them through Jesus' death and resurrection but who needed an indwelling force of God-breathing power to bring unity and cohesion to their raw surge of passion.

Therefore, to the eager eyes of the first-century church, the Holy Spirit felt like nothing they had ever experienced before He was the one their Lord and master had told them of, the one Jesus had promised to speak to his Father about, the one who was to come upon Christ's return to glory and “to be with you forever.”

And so, yes, though the Spirit is older than the musty dirt in your basement crawl space, he is younger and more alive than the folks who take their boats out on Sunday mornings and look for all the world as though they want for nothing.

He is the gift of God, just as the Son is, just as the Father himself is. Inside the incredible mystery that we do our best to explain as the Three-in-One, the Holy Spirit is God's eternal presence.

Window Treatments

But lest we get to thinking that this is all about us, like kids who wake up on Christmas morning with their want reflex kicked in high gear, we need to remember that God has his own reasons for giving his Spirit to us.

Again, to see this truth in action, our timeline can stretch far back into Bible lore, imagining a sense of breathless amazement that rushed through Israel's eyes and heartbeats at the crossing of the Red Sea. As night fell on the numbing memory of this near-death deliverance, "The Spirit of the Lord gave them rest" in their hearts (Isaiah 63:14), soothing them with the palpable touch of his presence.

Why, though, would God lead his people this way? Why not direct them to safety without the car chase, without having to run through columns of pent-up waves furious to return to their sea bed? Why must this give of "rest" necessitate a flight of panic?

"You led Your people this way," the great prophet wrote "to make a glorious name for Yourself." Rather than snatching us up to immediate safety, his objective in brooding over us with his securing, abiding Holy spirit is to reveal his character to the world through his dealings with ordinary folks like us.

That's because you can tell a lot more about a father by seeing how he treats his children than just by seeing what he buys for them.

John 14:15 "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor"

All three members of the Trinity are present in this short statement. What do you learn about each?

John 14:23 "We will come to him and make Our home with him."

What's hard about making yourself at home in an unfamiliar place? How is the Spirit able to do this in us?

John 14: 26 "the Holy Spirit – the Father will send Him in My name."

The Father has given the Spirit because the Son was obedient. How are all three active in your own salvation?

The Spirit is a gift from the Father. One of the proofs the apostles gave to verify the reliability of Jesus' ministry was to point to the trustworthiness of the Father, who "has given all things" into Christ's hands and who "gives the Spirit without measure" (John 3:34-35). Think of what the Father has continued to do in your life, consistently over time, to nurture and to rescue. He does it through his Spirit.

Father, thank you for noticing just what we needed and for sending us your Holy Spirit to ensure that we'd never have a need for anything.