

# The Etiquette of Intimacy

## A New Life in the Spirit's Power

Here we seek to lift the veil on aspects of our relationship with the Holy Spirit that are more intimate and subtle and, therefore, harder to describe. That should not surprise us. The closer we get to any mystery, the more mysterious it becomes.

**To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.** Colossians 1:27

## A Good Pair of Shoes

One of the first things everyone notices about the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is that He doesn't seem to be there! Oh, we sense well enough when He seems to be absent, and we certainly are aware when He is manifesting His presence—may we have more of those times please! But, if we are honest about it, much of the time He can be easily forgotten or overlooked. He fits into us so well that, like a good pair of shoes, you don't even notice Him at all. That may sound like a shockingly casual way of talking about the Living God—He is far from being mere footwear—nevertheless, this whole new way of living in us is His desire.



We are to “walk in Him” just as we would a pair of shoes that is both comfortable and protective. He loves us far too much to want to be the kind of spooky, “super-holy,” uncomfortable presence that would have us jumping out of our shoes at every turn. Nor would that serve His purpose. He doesn't intend to draw attention to Himself, but to Jesus. So, naturally, He is not forever saying to us, “Here I am! How'd you like what I just did? What do you think about that idea I gave you?”

It is not necessary, therefore, to anxiously apologize for not noticing Him, or thinking of Him. Simply thank Him whenever the reminder comes that your mind has drifted away from God and Jesus and refocus. Of course, you're not going to notice the Holy Spirit (most of the time). That's the whole point! We can get so super-serious around the subject of God that we may miss the great good fun He has in doing things for us on the sly. Don't you love doing things secretly for your loved ones? Their joy is your reward. So too with Holy Spirit.

## Becoming One

If we could bludgeon the English a bit, we would say that the goal of the Atonement is “at-one-ment.” Just as Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Jesus, so Jesus wants to be in us and have us be in Him. The way this is done is through the Holy Spirit becoming at-one with us. This cannot be forced, nor does it need to be. Grace works best as we seem to do nothing but trust.



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Consider how it would be if you were trying to be “at-one” with your body. At the most fundamental level you and your body are already seamlessly joined, how and where you don’t know. You just take it for granted and go about your day. We don’t go through our days intensely aware of our body, unless something is wrong with it. Otherwise, it is there, powerfully enabling us by sense and exertion to enter into the world surrounding us and partake of its life.

So, too, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit —united to Him in our spirit at the deepest level of our soul, beyond sight, beyond comprehension. Don’t try to go through your day, seeking to focus on the Holy Spirit. Seek, rather, the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Seek Jesus. Seek the Father’s will. Seek the path of peace. Seek the next right thing to do. The Holy Spirit will gladly (and imperceptibly) help you with all these things. As you enter into the flow of such a day given over to the pursuit of God, the Holy Spirit becomes at-one with you.

Other people will usually want to be noticed whenever they have gone out of their way to help us, and it is only right to show them generous appreciation. That’s good etiquette. The Holy Spirit, however, isn’t looking for appreciation. His great desire is to serve the Lord Jesus by effectively serving us. Of course, He appreciates it when we notice what He has done and thank Him for it. But the reality is that He is going out of His way to help us all of the time. Yet, this is not an onerous task that takes Him away from His preferred desires, it is what He has freely chosen to do. It is what He loves doing. That’s why He climbed inside of us in the first place!

If we were to thank Him for all that He does, it would leave no room for anything else. That’s not His goal. And besides, what would you think of a child who was constantly thanking mother or father for every little thing they did? Might you think the child had too little confidence in the parent’s love? Just relax: If you really appreciate Him, He knows.

## Who to Pray to?

Do we pray to the Holy Spirit? After all He is fully God. Why not go to Him for everything? The answer may be that we can, but it is preferred that we direct our prayers either to the Father or to Jesus. In fact, Jesus explicitly states that when it comes to requests, we are to “ask the Father in His Name” or pray directly to our Lord Himself. No reason is given in the text, but a few can be reasonably surmised, the first one being that the Holy Spirit prefers to turn our attention towards the other two, not Himself. Divine etiquette prompts us to abide by the Spirit’s desire.

Growing in intimacy with God and Jesus may be additional reasons. Being more or less required to go to the Father for what we need, “forces” us to face the most intimidating Person of the Trinity directly. This grows our relationship with our Father by leading us to discover that He is not as we may have feared Him to be. The fear of God, rightly understood, is immensely helpful to us, but godly fear is too often supplanted in our anxious hearts by a craven fear of God, which fears what He may do, or allow, or ask of us. That kind of fear never comes from God! Both Jesus and the Holy Spirit are at work to turn Adam’s frightened children around and lead us back to the Father of Light that we tend to keep running away from.

That Jesus invites us to pray to Himself directly surely has to do with cultivating that intimacy of conversation with our Savior and Best Friend which both the Father and the Holy Spirit evidently desire us to enjoy. See if this image helps you get oriented. On those dusty Galilean roads, the disciples spoke with Jesus face to face as they traveled along, bringing Him all their hopes and

dreams as well as all their requests. He wants to have that same kind of communion with us as we walk with Him through each day.

Then, the Holy Spirit was with the disciples, helping them to stay focused on Jesus. Now, that same Spirit is in us, helping us to keep our focus on the Lord. In fact, in my limited experience, few things attract the Holy Spirit like praising Jesus in fully focused worship. At those times it seems as if the Holy Spirit comes rushing in like a mighty wind, so great is His desire to honor our Lord.

## Grieving, Quenching and Snubbing

Scripture speaks of the Holy Spirit as a dove, perhaps the gentlest of all the winged creatures. Doves by their very nature evoke the peace they have come to symbolize. In a very real sense the Holy Spirit is the peace of Christ which abides with us. Don't we want this gentle dove of peace to rest always upon us as He did with Jesus at His baptism? Then let us take care how we act around Him. Doves are very easy to startle into flight!

### Grieving

We are advised neither to "grieve" the Holy Spirit nor to "quench" Him. We grieve the Holy Spirit when we take on attitudes against others whom He loves just as much as He loves us. Judging and accusing others, holding resentments against them, and speaking ill of them behind their backs, runs the risk of grieving the Holy Spirit. That's a discernible pain on the inside which can be felt just beyond the hard edge of our anger. It's His way of calling us to return to our first love and the commitment to mercy which got us started.

### Quenching

Quenching the Spirit is what can happen when we resist what He desires to do through us. Naturally, we probably all miss a lot of what He desires to do (or our lives would look radically more like that of Jesus), but quenching happens over things He has repeatedly demonstrated to us. To ignore a prompting He has trained us to notice, often results in a sudden feeling of deflation, as if the wind had gone out of our sails. This may have been because we were already tired and just couldn't be bothered, or we pulled back due to the challenge level of what He is asking, or we stubbornly insisted upon our own way.

### Snubbing

Snubbing the Spirit is admittedly a non-Biblical term which is being used here to denote a serious breach of etiquette when thinking about the Holy Spirit. It is acting as if He is somehow less of a person than we are. I'm not sure what effect this has upon Him, but I am quite sure it does us a great deal of mischief to think of our mysterious Guest as being something other than the marvelous and unique individual He is. The problem here is that our cultural conditioning has been training us to think of spirit as an impersonal force or benevolent power, something nebulous and ill-defined.



## "Spirituality" Verses the Spirit

When people talk of "spirituality," this seems to be what they have in mind. Yet, when Jesus said that God is Spirit, He could not have meant the limitations which we ordinarily place upon that term, for Jesus is Himself God and therefore fully Spirit. Our God has emotion, intellect and will, not in any fallen way, but heightened by perfection and filled with glory. He who made us in His Image and gives life to each one of us, cannot be less than we are. Whatever it is that we mean by soul, personhood and personality, God is that and more. In *Mere Christianity* C. S. Lewis addressed this gap in our perceptions.

*A good many people nowadays say, "I believe in a God, but not in a personal God." They feel that the mysterious something which is behind all other things must be more than a person. Now the Christians quite agree. But the Christians are the only people who offer any idea of what a being that is beyond personality could be like. All the other people, though they say that God is beyond personality, really think of Him as something impersonal: that is, as something less than personal.*

If we are to think rightly of the Holy Spirit we must imagine Him as a Person, one of the Three Persons of the Godhead. It would be bad form indeed to think of Him as a mere power or force: Never refer to the Third Person as an "It"! Nor, would it be Biblically correct to use any other personal pronoun than the male when referring to Him. The Holy Spirit is described both as the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit sent from Jesus.

Just as we are clearly intended to think of the Father as male and just as surely as Jesus is now forever the God-man, so the scriptures leave no option but to think of the Holy Spirit in male, not female, terms. Why this might be so, can be debated or explored, but we must at least acknowledge that we are not the creators of our revelation, but merely the receivers of it. It's good etiquette to address people according to their stated preference, especially divine Persons.

## Solitude, Silence and Serenity

If you wish to keep the divine dove resting upon you, learn to avoid grieving, quenching and snubbing the Spirit, but above all, seek to cultivate a resting place within your own heart. Make friends with solitude, silence and serenity. A more inviting landing zone for the Holy Spirit can hardly be imagined. This may require working with the Lord to gain a few divine reversals in how you perceive these three states, now that Christ has come into your life.

In solitude, we are no longer alone for He is always with us, therefore we need never give way to loneliness. In silence, the eternal Word is always speaking good things to our soul, therefore we need never rely upon others to build us up. In serenity, the real work of the world remains in His Hands while we do the one work required of us, therefore we need never succumb to anxiety and business. Admittedly, these are not easy lessons to learn, but it gives the Holy Spirit great pleasure if we sign up for His course of instruction.

Being content to live with Him in the peace of interior solitude, silence and serenity is the best etiquette of all. May the river of peace that flows in us through Him carry you into great adventures of life and ministry!



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## Scriptures

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Psalm 32:8

Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you. Psalm 32:9

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For over a decade Steve Evans and [Healing Streams](#) have been helping people recover inner peace and freedom through the free eCourse for healing, [Matters of the Heart](#). Through Forerunners4Him he has been showing how we can be saved for heaven and teaching the way to live a Spirit-filled life on earth. Go now to receive a completely free primer, [Getting to Heaven](#) and/or an introduction to [Living in the Spirit](#) at our website.



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