

LLC Board Members Workshop

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Participants:

- Congregation board members
- Ministers
- Annual meeting delegates

The Holy Spirit and the Congregation of God

Holy Spirit - God

The Holy Spirit is one of the forms or persons in which God presents himself. The Holy Spirit is not, of itself, a separate god, but is God Himself. The Athanasian Creed declares: *“So the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet there are not three Gods, but one God. [God’s actions are manifested through the three persons of God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.]”*

The same creed makes the following observation about the Holy Ghost and the Trinity of God: *“The Holy Ghost is of the Father and the Son, neither made nor created nor begotten but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers, one Son, not three Sons, one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.*

And in this Trinity, none is before or after another, none is greater or lesser than another, the whole three persons [of the Godhead] are coeternal and coequal. So that in all things, as aforesaid; the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.”

Examining the word of God leads us to discover the following from these passages:

- Jesus tells the disciples: “For the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26).
- The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son in a tangible manner as well: “Having said these things, he breathed on them and saith unto them: ‘Receive ye the Holy Ghost’” (John 20:22).

The Holy Spirit Works in Many Ways

I. Affecting directly:

- According to the Apostles' Creed, Jesus, Son of God, "was conceived by the Holy Ghost."
"And the angel answered and said unto her, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).
- The Holy Ghost descended upon Jesus as part of His baptism in the Jordan River (Mark 1:10).
- The Spirit of the Lord whisked the disciple Philip away from the vicinity of the chariot of the Ethiopian eunuch, once the same had received the grace of repentance (Acts 8:39).

II. In God's Congregation:

- "Then had the churches rest in all Judea, Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied" (Acts 9:31).
- "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, 'Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work unto I have called them'" (Acts 13:2).
- "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things." (Acts 15:28, the Jerusalem meeting)
- The Holy Spirit leads and governs God's Congregation.

III. In a believing person or through another person:

- The Old Testament tells us the following about Othniel, the son of Caleb's younger brother, Kenaz: "And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him and he judged Israel" (Judges 3:10).
- The last words spoken by the believing King David included: "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:2).
- ➔ There is no self-praising or pride in David's declaration. He is referring to a covenant that God had agreed upon with him.
- "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake in tongues and prophesied" (Acts 19:6).
- ➔ The Apostle Paul is performing the duties of the office of the gospel, as he was entrusted to do. The authority to proclaim the gospel of forgiveness is held only by a person who has, through faith, gained the Holy Spirit, which abides in him or her. Only in this way is the blessing of Christ's redemption work brought unto a person, to be owned by the person and for his or her salvation through the office of atonement.

IV. God's Word and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit opens the word of God to the possessor of that Spirit—a believer—to a reader, a preacher as well as a listener of the Word and the Holy Spirit makes the word alive.

- “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor.2:13-14).
- ”It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life” (John. 6:63).
- Without the gift of the Holy Spirit the word of God did not open to the Ethiopian eunuch. He needed a child of God, Philip, to help him. The eunuch said to Philip: "How can I, except some man should guide me?" (Acts 8:31).
- Paul told Timothy: ”Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (1 Tim. 4:1).

The Holy Spirit Gives Birth to Faith in the Fellowship of God's Congregation

”In the first place, [the Holy Spirit] has a communion all his own in the world. That communion is the mother that brings to birth and sustains every Christian through the word of God” (Luther, Large Catechism, Explanation for the Third Article of the Creed, Gal. 4:26).

The Apostle Paul describes how the relationship between Christ and His congregation is a great mystery. It is like the relationship of a husband and wife in a marriage. It is possible that even we do not understand this mystery, but we can be included in that marriage and feel joy therein. ”For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph. 5: 31-32).

When Jesus sent his disciples to preach the saving gospel, that gospel was on a specific subject. It was not just a gospel about generalities, but it was a gospel about the kingdom of God. (Luke 9:2, Luke 9:60, Acts 8:12) The gospel we proclaim today is on exactly this same subject. It is a gospel about Jesus Christ, the king of the kingdom of God.

”So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

”But [the will of man] has no power, without the Holy Ghost, to work the righteousness of God, that is, spiritual righteousness; since the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. 2, 14; but this righteousness is wrought in the heart when the Holy Ghost is received through the Word.” (Augsburg Confession Article XVIII, [which deals with a man's] Free Will)

Regarding the essential purpose of the Holy Spirit, Luther observes: “... so the Holy Spirit, from his office, must be called the Sanctifier, or one that makes holy. But how is this sanctification

accomplished? [The answer is: as the Son obtained his lordship by purchasing us with his birth, his death, his resurrection, etc.] so the Holy Spirit effects our sanctification through {all of the following} the communion of saints – the Christian Church – the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life eternal; [in other words], by leading us into his holy communion, in that he lays us upon the bosom of the Church, which becomes our teacher and leader unto Christ” (Luther, Large Catechism, Explanation of the Third Article of the Creed).

- ➔ The sermon exhorting to repentance is heard from the congregation of God, and it is in the fellowship of this congregation that repentance can occur. The Holy Spirit works in many ways but effects righteousness only when one has contact with the Kingdom of God. The 5th Article of the Augsburg Confession states: “The sharing of the gospel and the sacraments.¹ Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith where and when he pleases in those who hear the gospel,”
“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33).
- ➔ Luther observes in his explanation of the Creed: “For neither you nor I could ever know anything about Christ or believe in Him and receive Him as our Lord if it were not first offered to us and given into our hearts by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel.– – {Entrance to the communion of saints begins with the hearing of the Word.” (Luther, Large Catechism, Explanation of the Third Article of the Creed.)

The Holy Spirit Gathers the Congregation of Christ, Unites Its Members to Each Other, and Edifies It as the Body of Christ

The Holy Spirit is God, as we noted in the beginning in the Athanasian Creed. God works sovereignly, but the work of Christ continues as the work of the Holy Spirit in His congregation. (Christian Doctrine, Point 44. The Congregation, The Body of Christ)

In his discussion with the Pharisee Nicodemus, Jesus compares the (Holy) Spirit to the wind. In Greek, the word πνευμα - pneuma (pnyoo'-mah) means both wind and spirit. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:8, The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Text Form 2005)

Just as we can neither see nor know where the wind blows, neither can we see or explain by reason the presence or action of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, just as we can sense and hear the blowing of the wind, we can also sense the presence and voice of the Holy Spirit and, further, by faith, we can keep Him in our heart. The unity created by the Holy Spirit is actually more intense than any temporal feeling or mutually held opinion. The Holy Spirit gives birth to faith and makes a person a child of God. As a result of his or her faith a person is a partaker in the unity of the believers and also in their mutual understanding, love and unanimity, as inspired by the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit this unity is missing and it cannot be restored through mutual wishing, understanding or compromises made by people (as, for example, ecumenism).

The Epistle to the Philippians has this to say about the unity created by the Holy Spirit: "If *there be* therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind." {Phil. 2: 1-2} (The 1992 Finnish translation of the Bible renders this as: "Fulfill ye my joy and be likeminded. May ye be united together by love, harmony and agreement.")

The Holy Spirit effects love, tranquility and one-mindedness among believers. Even though we have varying opinions and views on temporal matters, we need to be one-minded in matters of faith and doctrine of Christ (2 John 1: 9). Sin breaks the love and unity of the Spirit between children of God. "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." (1 John 3:10)

The Holy Spirit bestows a variety of grace gifts upon believers. They are intended for "the edification of the mutual congregation", and not for furthering one's personal advantage, personal standing, charisma or leadership status. When we have been called to serve, for example as a minister or teacher in the congregation of God, we should humbly ask ourselves: "Are my gifts and my service edifying the congregation of Christ?" (Eph. 4:11-12,16) It is important for one who has been called to be a servant of the Word or a teacher to care for his or her own faith and to subject himself or herself to care by the congregation. This is, above all, for the sake of being able to remain believing, but [for ministers] also so that he could tend (or watch over) the flock of the Lord. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." (Acts. 20:28) The congregation calls the servants of the word and also cares for them.

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." (1 Cor. 12:4,7-11)

As a spirit of unity, the Holy Spirit does not cause strife, schism, differing teachings or unrest. These are caused by the sin that abides in a human being. The Holy Spirit clarifies our vision of Christ and gathers the flock to Him, the Good Shepherd. The congregation that has been gathered by the Holy Spirit is in "one faith, one mind and one understanding. They possess many gifts, but are one in love, without sect or division." (Luther, Large Catechism, Explanation of the third article of the Creed)

"I will say this: We know, because in the creed with which we confess our faith, we say: I believe in a holy, mutual congregation. Therefore it is impossible for the congregation to err in even the most minor point related to faith." (Luther: The Bondage of the Will)

The Holy Spirit as a Teacher

The congregation of God has always encouraged the reading of the Bible, the sacred Word of God. We have, after all, also been given a key, the Holy Spirit, to understand it. We previously quoted Apostle Paul's observation that it is possible to understand this special revelation of God only with the aid of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2: 13-14). The confessional documents of Lutherans express it in this way: The Holy Spirit "opens the heart and understanding to comprehend the Bible. (The Formula of Concord, Solida Declaration, 2. Free Will and Human Ability). A Psalm writer indeed puts it beautifully as follows: "Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105). The Apostle Peter also urges us to "even more firmly trust in the prophetic word" (quote translated from the 1992 Finnish translation of the Bible, the King James has the corresponding verse, II Pet. 1: 19 thus: " We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: "). [This prophetic word] is the Word of God, which becomes a living word when enlightened by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit never teaches contrary to the Word of God but is totally aligned with it. The Holy Spirit opens this already completed revelation of God [the Holy Scripture]. The Holy Spirit does not teach in many different ways about justification, sin and the forgiveness of sins, the sacraments, the endeavor, the kingdom of God or any other matters of faith. Neither can we believe in a different way than the "Holy, mutual congregation" does, for it is "of the same faith, mind and understanding" as Luther noted above. We may have experienced at services or other gatherings of believers how the Holy Spirit has enlightened and opened the understanding of some matter on the basis of the Word of God. The same work of the Holy Spirit occurred in the time of the Apostles at the meeting in Jerusalem: "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us ..." (Acts. 15:28).

Through the Holy Spirit we hear the voice of Christ, the Good Shepherd, even when the Spirit is speaking through a servant of the Word, who is weak and sinful in himself. Not even the errors arising from his being human or his weak words can cover up the voice of the Good Shepherd. (Luther, The Church Postil, part II, The Sermons of the Gospel, First Sunday after Easter, II:26 / John 20:19 – 31) On the other hand, not even the most skillful and highly educated speaker is able to produce the voice of the Good Shepherd without faith and the Holy Spirit. Without the power of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God does not open and become a living word for its speaker or hearer.

When speaking of the office of preaching, as based on John 10:1-11, Luther reminds us that the duty of the hearers, the sheep, is to determine if they are hearing the voice of the Good Shepherd in the speaker's voice.

“The sheep evaluate [the sermon] and distinguish if the voice is the correct one or not. [The hearers say] Have at it now, if you have come to any conclusion, we will examine it for correctness, and we will be making our decision in accordance with the right to criticize, which has been given to every Christian individually, not by human authority but, instead, by godly authority. For that is exactly what natural sheep do – they flee from the stranger’s voice and cleave to the voice of their own shepherd.” (Luther, About the right and authority of the congregation to criticize all doctrines, and also to call, appoint and dismiss teachers [or preachers], House Postil, second Sunday after Easter, Gospel: John. 10:1-16).

By Faith or Understanding?

Even a believing person’s understanding is very limited. This is the way God has seen fit. With bonds of the Spirit, God has joined us to His congregation, which, according to the Word of God is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15). What is meant by this? Jesus says that He, himself, is the way, the truth and the life. He is the head of the congregation body, perfection and truth. When we have, by faith and the Holy Spirit, connection to the body of Christ, we also have a connection to its head. The congregation of God is the pillar and ground of the truth because Christ dwells in the congregation. God reveals this truth to us, through the Holy Spirit, in His Word and in His congregation.

If a person, through sin, loses his/her connection to the congregation of Christ, he/she also loses the connection to the truth that is in Christ. Then he/she relies, when it comes to matters of faith, on his/her own reason and understanding. What might happen as a result is that the teaching of the kingdom of God may start to seem trivial and simple. It does not necessarily contain the type of depth that would meet his/her own need to understand the mysteries of God. Thus the familiar and simple sermons might begin to seem like “the same old, miserable food” or “light bread”, that the people of Israel got sick and tired of. The Bible tells us that the people then turned against God and Moses (Numbers 21:5). That food given by God, the manna, was, nevertheless sufficient and good. It kept them alive. In the same way, the Word of God preached through the Holy Spirit feeds our souls.

We would be well advised to ask within our own heart: “Am I content with the food that God offers to me in the word preached by the congregation, or does it seem to me to be “miserable food”? Do I want to hear a more profound and timely message, which would provide more answers and understanding? Must I understand first so I could believe, or can I be content by having the faith come first and let God thereby grant sufficient understanding as a gift? The sin that abides in our flesh is sometimes exposed as pride and also by an emphasis on personally understanding and knowing. The Apostle Paul reminds us that: “... Knowledge puffeth up but charity edifieth” (1 Cor. 8:1). When the Holy Spirit directs the congregation, the counsels that it issues are correct and in accordance with the mind of God. Sometimes a forceful person or group have an influence that will confuse us and make many of us sorrowful. We can, however, trust that the Spirit of God will make sure that the matter will be corrected, and one-mindedness will

be restored in the congregation. It is not easy for us to admit when we have erred have understood incorrectly. We may implore God to give us a humble heart when He needs to instruct, rebuke and correct us through His Word, or through a travel companion or the congregation of God.

Some reminders from the Word of God:

” ... Yea, all *of you* be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.” (1 Pet. 5:5, James 4:6)

”... I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” (Isa. 57:15)

The Apostle Paul tells us how God had given him “a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure” (2 Cor. 12:7). He prayed that God would free him from such torment. God responded to Paul thusly: “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:8). We may pray God that we, too, would be content with the understanding, and above all, with the grace that God grants us.

As children of God we have the joy and privilege to discuss all issues related to faith. When such discussions are conducted on a foundation of living faith and as guided by the Holy Spirit, our souls receive food. If the discussion arises from a person’s own flesh it will easily turn into a debate with a focus on who is correct and whose understanding is stronger. At such a time the discussion will stray to the pathways of human understanding or knowledge or level of education. The Apostle Paul points out to Timothy that there were those in Ephesus who had spread some other doctrine which “genders strife”. Some had strayed away from “a good conscience, and *of* faith unfeigned”. They had begun to engage in “vain jangling”. According to the Apostle Paul, they do this “Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.”. Such behavior, says the Apostle Paul, is not for the purpose of “godly edifying which is in faith” (1 Tim. 1:3-7). Even when we lack abundant understanding or we are bothered by questions lacking answers, we may trust in the grace promises of God and be believing in good cheer. Our faith is not dependent on our own understanding of God’s mysteries, but on God’s grace on our behalf. When the disciples had difficulties understanding the statements of Jesus regarding the enormity of God’s grace, they demanded neither more explanation nor greater understanding from Jesus, but instead pleaded: “Increase our faith.” (Luke. 17:5)

The Holy Spirit Exhorts, Teaches and Pardons Us

The Holy Spirit acts as the voice of God to teach within the heart of a believer. It requires us to do what is correct and forbids us from doing what is wrong. (Christian Doctrine, Part 16, The Conscience) A person must be obedient to that voice, and not belittle it. The actions of the conscience are based on the word of God. It is possible for the conscience, because of sin, to harden, so that we would no longer hear the voice of God. The Holy Spirit directs us to put sin away and to repair breaches in the relationships between persons. In this way we maintain faith and a good conscience. (Heb. 12: 1, Matt. 5: 24, I Tim. 1: 19). So as to support a tender and precious conscience, God allows us to also hear the voice of the Holy Spirit in His congregation. The Bible often exhorts us to hear what “the Spirit sayeth unto the churches”. (Revelations, chapters 2 and 3).

The Holy Spirit exhorts us to live in a godly manner and to sanctify ourselves for God (2 Cor. 7: 1). We are not capable of sanctifying ourselves of our own power, but God, himself, sanctifies us. We cannot, however, live in sin, or be lenient about sin, but we must battle against it with the weapons provided by God. When we are obedient to the voice of God we are obedient to God. When we are disobedient to the voice of God we are disobedient to God.

The Church Father Augustine, who is often quoted by Luther, makes the following observation on the work of the Holy Spirit in a believing person thusly: “Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” (2 Cor. 3: 17) Here we have the Spirit of God, and through it we have, as a gift, righteousness: It provides for us the desire to not commit sins, and therein we have our liberty. One must cease from the work of the bondsman and celebrate a spiritual Sabbath. (Augustine, The Spirit and the Letter)

The Holy Spirit warns us about sin, teaches us to do what is right and exhorts us to take care of matters that trouble our conscience. Basing his assertion on Christian Doctrine, and specifically Point 83, our brother Erkki Reinikainen spoke, in his introduction, “The Wholesome Doctrine”, at the Congregation Elders and Speakers’ meeting at the Summer Services in Oulunsalo in 1982, about the influence of the Holy Spirit on the gift of confession, stating: ”In confession we put away those sins that the Holy Spirit has put a spotlight on in our conscience. When we confess these to a confessor-father, it is as though we are confessing them to God, and when the confessor father, another child of God, proclaims the forgiveness of sins, it is a work of God done through the Holy Spirit. Confession does not give us our salvation. Its purpose is for preserving the mystery of faith in a clean conscience.”

With regard to the consolation by the gospel that takes place between believers, Luther says thus: “Dear brother or sister, I notice that you are timid and downcast, because thou fearest the wrath and judgment of God due to thy sin. But do heed now and cheer up! Be of good comfort and fearless, for Christ, thy Lord and Savior, Who hast come for the sake of sinners, to save them, has commanded both those servants whose calling has led then to an official position, as well as, whenever needed, anyone whosoever to act on His behalf and comfort another person and to declare, in His name, that [a troubled person] is freed from his or her sins. I tell thee that when

thou hearest such a comforting message, accept it for yourself with joy and gratitude, just as if thou hast heard it from Christ Himself. (Luther, Church Postil, Part II: 36, The Preaching of the Gospel, [designated for] the first Sunday after Easter. [The Postil point is based on John 20: 19-31]. I am sure we all have also experienced how the Holy Spirit of God responds by providing peace when we have been allowed, by using the grace gospel, to put away the sins that had troubled our conscience.

A Tree and its Fruits

The Holy Spirit influences the person within whom He abides. The fruits of the Holy Spirit can be detected in him or her. The Apostle Paul writes about these fruits thusly: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23).

Does it seem to us that we have produced this kind of fruit, or do we feel exactly the opposite? The Spirit of God and our own flesh battle within each one of us, as the Apostle Paul, in that same epistle, points out. He also urges us to “Allow the Spirit to guide thy life.” (Gal. 5:16). [The King James version renders it as: “Walk in the Spirit.”]

The Bible also often tells us that this Spirit of God may depart from a person and an evil spirit will be able to replace it. Regarding the disobedient King Saul, we are told: “But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.” (1 Sam. 16:14). Sin had separated Saul from God. The Spirit of God can also return into a person through the grace of forgiveness and the atonement work of Jesus (for example: King David).

As humans we, unlike God, are unable to see into the heart of another person. But we can still detect the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, for “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom. 8: 18).

On the other hand, in His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus, to warn about false teachers, tells us that it is possible to identify such from their fruits. He states: “Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit” (Matt. 7:17).

In the Epistle to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul writes more about a different type of evil fruit, which arise of the flesh: ” Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Gal. 5:19-21) [This list in the 1992 Finnish translation of the Bible is stated thusly: immorality, unchasteness, lewdness, idolatry, witchcraft, enmity, quarrels, zealotry, anger, scheming, dissension, forming a schism (heresy), envy, binge drinking, wild partying and other such behavior]

We can note that, just like in the life of an individual child of God, journeying in God’s kingdom, dealing with shared issues, discussions, supporting, caretaking and bearing one

another, we yearn for and can feel secure when the Holy Spirit can work in us and through us. Rigidness, standing in opposition, pride and the trivialization of others cause anxiety and fear. It is good to remember the Bible's teaching: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law." (Rom. 13:10)

In fact, God's children are known by their love for one another, and we can nurture and care for this love through the power of the Holy Spirit. And by faith we are beneficiaries of the greatest love of all, Jesus Christ, who is "full of grace and truth". (John 1:14)

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