

## “The Original I-Messenger”

John 14:15-27

Series: *Forgotten God Week 1. The Counselor – The Spirit of Jesus Lives in Us*

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Cell phones and the internet are the most revolutionary invention since the light bulb and the electric grid. Your cell can make dinner reservations, show a movie, buy stocks, translate Swahili, answer any question and connect you to anyone on the planet. Cell phones also make life go faster – especially through the miracle of texting. Originally called Instant Messenger or IM, you can now message through Facebook, iMessage and Whatsapp to multiple people. To do this teens developed a new version of English that doesn't waste time. They threw out silly things such as punctuation, capital letters, grammar, sentences and even words. Today you might text: sup (what's up?), j/c (just chillin'), n2m (not too much), lol (laugh out loud).

But chopping down the English language to a few letters is not enough. The IM world now uses pictures called Emojis and symbols called Emoticons. I'm going to give you a quiz to see if you can guess what they mean. I'll start you off with some easy ones.

:)	Smile
:(	Sad
:[	Bored
:()	Loudmouth
:+(	Got punched in the nose
:+(	Crying
(:O:)	Band-Aid
:-P	Sticking out tongue
:-P''''	Drooling
:-#	Someone Wearing Braces
:-&	Tongue-tied

And what new language would be complete without a list of famous people? Check these out.

*< :-)	Santa Claus
+<:-)	Religious leader
+<:-	Monk or nun
+O:-)	The Pope
5:-)	Elvis
(8(	Homer Simpson

So I thought I need an emoticon of me. I commissioned an expert to make a few symbols of me – my five year old grandson Ben.

8-{	Here I am with a mustache when I was still wearing glasses
:-{	Here's when I got contacts
:-D	This is me smiling
:-D}	And with my goatee. Notice I don't have hair in any of them.

Wouldn't it be great if you could iMessage with God? Well guess what, long before there was an Internet, long before Al Gore invented the Internet, long before God invented Al Gore, God created IM. God is the Original I-Messenger. It says so in the Bible. In Exodus 3:14 when Moses stood before the burning bush and asked the Lord, "What is your name?" God said, 'IM who IM ... say to the Israelites IM has sent me to

you' (That's the Hogleund Revised Standard Version). Okay, so maybe it doesn't exactly say that. But God is the Original I-Messenger. He sent Someone to us so He could instantly communicate with us anywhere, anytime. That Someone is the Holy Spirit.

Today we begin our new message series: *Forgotten God: Awakening to the Power of the Holy Spirit*. Through our study of Scripture and Francis Chan's book we will remember and reconnect with The Holy Spirit. People say to me, "I don't understand the Spirit. I know the Father and the Son but who is the Holy Spirit?" That's surprising since the Father and Son are in heaven. The only member of the Trinity with us on earth is the Spirit. The only way we know the Father and Son is through the Spirit. The only person of God we are personally in touch with is the Spirit. In fact, the Holy Spirit is *in us*. Why, then, is it so hard for us to understand the Holy Spirit? I think because the Spirit is close to us. Ask a fish to describe living in water, ask a human to describe living in air. It's around us, it's in us, we can't live without it. Yet it's hard to put into words.

The purpose of this series is not so much to know about the Spirit but to help you know the Spirit. We will give you information about the person of the Spirit yet the real goal is to experience the presence of the Spirit in a deeper way. Francis Chan says,

My hunch is that most of you ... have basic knowledge *about* the Holy Spirit; but when it comes to experiencing the Spirit in your life, it's a different story. Take a moment and ask yourself this question: *When was the last time I undeniably saw the Spirit at work in or around me?* If you are having trouble recounting a time when the Spirit was at work in or around you, perhaps that is because you have been ignoring the Spirit. Perhaps it is because you have a lot of head knowledge about the Spirit, but not much of a relationship with Him. My prayer is this book will draw you into deeper communion with the Spirit and greater experience of His power and presence in your life.<sup>1</sup>

The best place to learn about the Spirit is to listen to Jesus. It is the night of his arrest, the calm before the storm of his crucifixion. As the disciples eat the Passover, Jesus' words make them feel this is the last meal of a man on death row.

My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me: Where I am going, you cannot come" (John 13:33).

Jesus is going away. Imagine the shock, fear, and confusion on the disciples' faces. So He offers this comfort:

But I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you. I will ask the Father and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth (John 14:16, 18).

Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit. His favorite term for the Spirit is the Greek word Paraclete. It is a hard word to put into English. It is translated as Counselor, Comforter, Advocate or Helper. It literally means "A person called to stand beside another and offer help" such as an attorney in a court of law, an advocate in a dispute. It's a helper and defender in a time of trouble.

I tell you the truth: it is to your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the

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<sup>1</sup> Francis Chan, *Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit* (David C. Cook, Colorado Springs, 2009) 35-36.

Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you (John 16:7).

While in the body, Jesus is in one place at a time. Through the Spirit, he can be in every place throughout time. He can communicate His message instantly to us any time or place. The Holy Spirit is not a substitute for Jesus. The Father and the Son will come and make their home in the life of every believer through the Holy Spirit (John 14:23). Let that grab you: If you are a disciple of Jesus Christ, God lives in you. God's presence is not just beside you, but deep within you.

Years ago I often visited a 94 year old lady named Edith Thomas. Once I brought her flowers from the church. Her hearing and eyesight were dimmed but not her mind and spirit. She read her Bible and devotional book daily. At the end of the visit, she said, "It was sweet of you to drop by. I like presence better than presents." "What?" I asked. Pointing to the flowers she said, "Not p-r-e-s-e-n-t-s, but p-r-e-s-e-n-c-e" and she pointed to me. "Your presence means the most to me. Please come again." Jesus didn't just send us presents. The Holy Spirit is His presence with us and in us. You are not alone. You are never alone. The God of the Universe lives in you.

What does the Holy Spirit do in you and me? There are many roles scattered throughout the New Testament. Today we look at three Jesus mentions in the Gospel of John. First, **the Spirit Convicts You**. Jesus declares,

When (the Spirit) comes, he will convict the world of guilt with regards to sin, because people do not believe in me (John 16:8-9).

The first job of this heavenly attorney is to put you and me on trial. Why? Because the Spirit must first convict us, convince us that we need Christ. We humans tend to go our own way instead of God's way, to rely on our strength instead of God's, to find fulfillment in our achievements instead of in God's love. "Why do I need God?" some may ask, "Compared to others, I'm a good person - I help others, I do charity work, I follow the golden rule. What more does God expect of me?"

But then the Spirit comes and puts us on trial. He proves to us we are not perfect. He shows us where we sin and fall short. It may come when you feel you've lost your way. It may be when your strength has run out. It may even be when all your earthly supports let you down and you have nothing left. Some people only look up to God when everything else lets them down. Like a prosecuting attorney, the Spirit first gives you the bad news of your sin and shortcomings, then the Good News of Christ's forgiveness and salvation. Only the Spirit can convince you Jesus is the Way and the Truth and the Life, the only way to the Father. Pascal, the French Mathematician, says in every life there is an infinite abyss. We try to fill that hole with all manner of things: power, pleasures, possessions, popularity. But the Spirit shows only Christ can fill the void. It may happen in a dramatic conversion or a gradual awakening to the truth, at the lowest point of your life or in a high mountain top experience. The Spirit may be convicting you right now. If so, open your heart to Christ and let the Spirit fill that abyss.

Second, **the Spirit Counsels You**. Jesus said,

The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have taught you (John 14:26).

It is through the Spirit that God speaks to us. He is the Original I-Messenger. You can read the Bible cover to cover but without the Spirit, it is just another work of religious

literature or a fairy tale. With the Spirit, these words come alive as God's Word. God speaks directly to you through the Bible, by the power of the Spirit. The words start to leap off the page and into your life. As someone once said, "The Bible is the only book that reads me." Every time I study the Scriptures, the Spirit reveals new insights and discoveries. Every time I prepare to preach a sermon, the Spirit guides my study and writing. The Spirit speaks to me through all of you. You have no idea what insights the Spirit gives me from your lips and lives. Yet even if the Spirit is in the writing and preaching of the message, it's all a waste of time if the Spirit is not also in you as you hear and live these words. You cannot receive my text if you don't have a cell or computer and a phone plan with Almighty AT&T or some other carrier in the sky. Some of you say, "How did you know I needed to hear that?" I didn't, but the Spirit did. Some of you say, "You really spoke to me when you said so and so," and it worries me because I don't remember saying that. I believe in those moments, the Spirit spoke to you. God absolutely refuses to be silent. The great I AM is IMing you.

And third, **the Spirit Comforts You**. Jesus promises,  
Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (John 14:27).

Some Bibles translate the word Paraclete as the Comforter. The word comforter does not mean a blanket. "Co" means "with" and "fort" means "strength." The literal meaning of Comforter is someone who gives you strength. Why does Jesus say, "Do not be afraid?" He is sending the disciples out into a dangerous world. Yet He does not send them out as orphans, they are never alone. The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, will be with them. He will encourage them. The Spirit will put courage in them. The Spirit will pray to the Father for them. The Spirit will give them the words to say. The Spirit will give them a peace that is beyond the understanding of this world, a peace this world can never give. He wants to give that strength to you. We will face the same struggles, challenges and heartache as the rest of the world. Yet if we live by the power of the Holy Spirit, if we are filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit, if we are led by the Holy Spirit we will face them differently than everyone else. We will face them without fear.

When the checkbook does not stretch as far as the bills: be not afraid, I am with you.  
When the grades come back and they are worse than you expected: be not afraid  
When injustice and dirty politics rule the office: be not afraid  
When you can't keep you close knit family from unraveling: be not afraid  
When temptation keeps calling your name: be not afraid  
When you feel rejected by friends or family because of your faith: be not afraid  
When you need a reason to live one more day: be not afraid  
When you wonder if there is a God in heaven who cares: be not afraid

One of the most moving passages in English literature comes towards the end of Charles Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities*, a story of the French revolution. Each day, a grim procession of prisoners made its way on the streets of Paris to the guillotine. One prisoner, Sidney Carton, a brave man who once lost his soul but now found it again, was giving his life for his friend. Beside him there was a young girl. They met before in the prison, and the girl noticed the man's

gentleness and courage. She said to him, "If I may ride with you, will you let me hold your hand? I am not afraid, but I am little and weak, and it will give me more courage."

So they rode together, her hand in his; and when they reached the place of execution, there was no fear in her eyes. She looked up into the quiet composed face of her companion, and said, "I think you were sent to me by heaven."

In all the dark valleys of life, the Holy Spirit is sent to be at our side.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus promises, "I will not leave you as orphans." A horrifying discovery that came to light after the fall of Communism were the orphanages of Romania. Babies were warehoused three and four to a crib without proper food, heat or even a clean diaper. God brought into my life not a baby but a teenager from one of those orphanages - her name was Juliana. As a child, Juliana, her sister, and father were caught in an industrial fire. Juliana escaped with legs badly burned. Her father and sister did not.

Later, her mother, for whatever reason, placed her in one of the state orphanages. While Juliana was there, her mother underwent a crude surgical operation and bled to death. Now she was an orphan indeed. There was little chance her legs would ever heal. There was little chance, as a teenager, anyone would want her. But through the Pearl Buck Foundation, a couple in Bucks County named Bill and Janet arranged for Juliana to come to America. Here, her body was healed. And so was her spirit. Juliana met three Romanian women in Bucks County who shared Christ with her. When I met her, right from the start, I could tell the Spirit was strong in her. I had the honor of baptizing Juliana. Yet I, with all my seminary training, was humbled by this child. This teenage girl who suffered and saw tragedies for three lifetimes, radiated the love, joy, and peace of the Spirit. This young woman's first concern was to tell others about her Savior. Juliana is not an orphan. Juliana is a child of her heavenly Father. Juliana is filled with the Spirit. Juliana is a witness to the power of the Spirit.

Woodside, let Jesus Christ speak His I-Messages through you. Be a witness who is filled with the Holy Spirit. Let Jesus place your life in the hands of the Holy Spirit and say, "Your witness, Counselor." Amen.

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<sup>2</sup> Owen Bourgaize, Guernsey, United Kingdom.