

March 22, 2026

Creed Series #6

“United in the Holy Spirit”

John 14:23-26

Ephesians 4:3-6

Intro:

We now come to the last section of the Apostle’s Creed, and the last section of our reflection on the unifying foundation of faith that the creed draws us into as Christians.

Thus far in our exploration of the Apostle’s Creed, we have been asked to believe in God the Father and in Jesus Christ (God the Son). Now we are asked the same question about the Holy Spirit. Can we say with honesty of faith that we believe in the Holy Spirit? I hope the answer is “yes”.

The Holy Spirit is part of the triune Godhead. He was present in the creation of the world – as was the Father and the Son. He was present at the baptism of Jesus – along with the Father and the Son. And He is the presence of God in the life of the believer today. Just as the Father sent the Son, so He sent the Spirit after the ascension of the Son. The Holy Spirit is the on-going witness to what Jesus has done in each believer’s life– his life, his teaching, his death and resurrection, and also the agent of on-going sanctification in the individual and communal (church) believer.

The Holy Spirit is the power of God working in and through the lives of His people.

So, this week and next week we are going to look at this present and transforming work of the Spirit, and what we as Christians should be unified in what we believe about Him.

The Holy Spirit:

As I said earlier, the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. He is, however, a bit trickier to pin down. In creation we see the handiwork of the Father. In the cross, we see the person and work of the Jesus, the Son. But to see the Holy Spirit is more challenging. When we talk about Jesus living in us, what we are really talking about is the indwelling of the Spirit in each believer's life. "(T)he Spirit touches us personally with the personal presence of God through the resurrection of Jesus."¹ It is through the work and teaching of the Spirit that we know what God desires of us, and also how we are equipped to serve in that task.

Bruce Milne, whom I have referenced before, says that the Holy Spirit is both a personal being (meaning He is active, living, and relatable, and not just some impersonal force that is acting upon our lives), and a divine being. By saying that he is divine, we are also saying that he is an equal part of the divinity that is God. According to Milne, "He is a member of the Godhead, the ever blessed object of our worship, love and praise, who shares the same divine nature as the Father and the Son (Mt. 28:18ff; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6)."²

It is through the understanding of the Holy Spirit that the rest of the creed is understood and connected.

The Church and Community:

This whole section of the creed is a series of statements that we are asked to hold as primary and foundational. And they are held under the work of the Holy Spirit. We are asked if we believe in the church and the community of those who gather to worship. When we think of the church in this context – that is, the language of "the catholic church", we do not mean the Roman Catholic Church, which is a denomination and different from other denominations. The Creed is referring to the Church universal – the true Christian church of all times and all places. This

¹ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Creed: What Christians Believe and Why It Matters* (Westminster: The Crown Publishing Group, 2007), 223.

² Bruce Milne, *Know the Truth: A Handbook of Christian Belief*, 2nd ed (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 222.

church is made up of the various denominations and expressions. It is the church we get when Christians from all corners of the world stand united and agreed on primary issues of faith. It is the body of Christ, the gathering of saints for the mission of God, that Jesus set in place after the resurrection.

The church is guided by the Holy Spirit's presence in each person and all of them working together.

According to the *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Development*, "It is clear from (Scripture) that the Holy Spirit is God/Christ powerfully, mysteriously, sometimes quietly and unobtrusively at work in and through the church."

The *New Dictionary of Theology* acknowledges the influence of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in reappropriating the "NT emphasis on the Spirit not just as the giver of new birth and personal holiness, but the powerful driving force that motivates and equips Christians for participation in God's mission in the world."

For whatever reason, and I believe there is something of a mystery to it, God chose to place his mission in the world in the hands of the gathering of believers, called the church. When we agree in this section of the creed, we are agreeing that we – all of Christianity – have a purpose that is not our own, and certainly bigger than any one singular church building or group. We are not a building, although that is helpful. We are not a program or a budget, although those are both useful and needed. We are the people of God – the communion of saints, to borrow the language of the creed. We are messy and imperfect, but we are one and united in Christ. Paul uses the image of the body of Christ – each with different roles and purposes, but all connected together and joined (through the central nervous system of the Holy Spirit?) to Christ, who is the head of this body.

We are to be a gathering of like-minded believers for the purpose of worship, of encouragement, and spurring one another on to the purpose God has for us. We are not meant to go through the life of faith alone.

Conclusion:

The good news of the church, of the gathering of the community of saints together, is that God knows exactly what He is getting in to when He places his mission into the church's hands. He knows that we are a gathering of frail human beings. Yet we are His – the triune God's – chosen instruments in this world. "The very structure of the creed implies that the invisible God who is creator and judge, the risen Christ who is enthroned with the Father, and Holy Spirit who sanctifies humans work through and in the life of a community is, in Nietzsche's phrase, 'human, all too human!'"³

We simply cannot dismiss the church in our Christian life. We might want to, thinking that it would be easier and less controversial just to live our Christian lives on our own, but that is not how Jesus set things up, nor how the Father built us. For all of its flaws, we need to believe that this is the best way. We need to believe that through the honest and faithful living and witness of the church, God will be made known.

And so we need to continue to remind ourselves and one another that we are to live faith together, that worship is a group effort, that stepping into the world seeking to serve in the mission of God is something we do together, and that as much as we read our Bibles in private devotion, the words contained there were written not to individuals, but to the community as a whole.

We may all be different, with different experiences, hopes dreams, passions, and everything else, but we are all united in Christ as His body and so we need to hold closely to that, even and especially in those moments where we are not always in agreement.

Let's pray.

³ Johnson, *The Creed*, 255.