

Finding *Renewal* in the Love of God

Unit 3: Discovering Renewal in the Presence of the Spirit

Unit Introduction

Some background: The basic problem existing in the church was a misunderstanding regarding the Spirit. Historical documentation from the first and second centuries, as well as a close examination of the epistle itself, make it clear that many (2.19) did not understand what it meant to be a spiritual person. They believed that no person of the flesh *could be* godly—even if she wanted; in turn, they believed that no godly being could be totally human. The issue of understanding Jesus (the immaculately conceived Son of God born of the flesh) was difficult—but perhaps no more difficult than understanding themselves as flesh and blood inhabited by the Spirit of God. Rather than wrestle with the implications of such Truths, these “believers” awaited Jesus’ return when they could shed the flesh entirely and truly become totally integrated spiritual beings.

According to John’s gospel, Jesus begins teaching his disciples about the Spirit just before the crucifixion. *“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.”* A few verses later, John records Jesus saying: *“the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.”* In addition to his own experiences, the writer of 1 John has these promises in mind as he pens his epistle. If you would like more insight (outside the epistle) into John’s understanding of the Holy Spirit, you might also read (the gospel of) John 14-16.

Some thoughts to start: Using only the two verses from the gospel of John recorded above, respond to these questions:

- Who gifts the Holy Spirit to the Christian, the Father or the Son?
- What benefits does the Christian receive from the presence of the Holy Spirit in her life?
- Why is it that the world cannot receive the Spirit?