Text: I Corinthians 12:1-3
Title: "Plugged into the Spirit"

ILLUSTRATION – Watching my namesake hurricane, Hurricane Dean, brew down in the Caribbean, I was reminded of a story I read recently about an elderly woman whose house in South Florida was severely damaged by a hurricane. The woman, named Norena, received an insurance settlement, and the repair work began immediately. But soon the money ran out, and the contractor just quit working, leaving behind an unfinished home with no electricity. Norena had been living without power ever since, with no money to finish the repairs.

> The crazy part of this story is that the hurricane was not Hurricane Katrina in 2005, but Hurricane Andrew … in 1992. Norena has been living in a dark, unfinished house for 15 years. No heat in the winter. No air conditioning in the hot, humid Florida summers. No lights. No hot shower. Norena had gotten by with a small lamp and a single burner.
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> Well, just a few months ago, a city worker received a tip about Norena's situation, and plans were put in motion that would repair her home and reconnect her to the power that she had been missing for 15 years.

I'm reminded today that many people are living lives disconnected from the power of God. In that condition they've managed to just keep on living without the power for living that is available through the Spirit of Almighty God living within.

Now open your Bibles to I Corinthians 12.

> Last week I began a series of messages that I pray will help us all reconnect to the power of God for living and for ministry. The "Spirit Way" is the life you've always wanted. A life filled with love, joy, peace and so much more. The "Spirit Way" is also the power you've always needed. The Holy Spirit causes the power of Jesus Christ to flow in and through our lives.
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> The Holy Spirit is the indwelling presence of God in our lives shaping our lives to look like Jesus. He is also the indwelling presence of God in the Church, shaping the church to look like the Body of Christ.

If we are live in the "Spirit Way," enjoying the life we've always wanted and experiencing the power we've always needed, there are two essentials…

- **We must be <u>knowledgeable</u> about the ministry of the Spirit.**

  1 Corinthians 12:1 (NIV) – Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.

  The word for "ignorant" there is the word from which we get our word "agnostic." It means "to not know."

Now you notice here that Paul is not speaking specifically about the Holy Spirit, but rather about "spiritual gifts." The word here means "matters of the Spirit" or "things of the Spirit." It mostly refers to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and specifically here in I Corinthians 12, the gifts of the Spirit.

And Paul says "I do not want you to be ignorant about these things." The fact is that many believers are ignorant … they're not knowledgeable about the things of the Spirit of God.

- **We must be <u>available</u> to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.** And this is where I want to spend the rest of our study. There was great confusion in the church in Corinth about the operation of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers, and in the life of the church. And Paul gets to the heart of this confusion immediately.

1 Corinthians 12:2-3 (NIV) - You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. [3] Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

Now let's just see if we can sort this out. Would you notice the word "influenced" in v.2. Then notice the phrase in v.3, "speaking by the Spirit of God," and then later in v.3, "by the Holy Spirit." It can either be translated "by the Spirit" or "in the Spirit."

You can divide people into two categories: Those who are influenced by the world and by Satan, and those who are influenced by the Holy Spirit of God. It's a distinction between those who live "in the world," and those who live "in the Spirit." And the way you know one from the other is what they do with Jesus and what they say about Jesus.

Now the situation in Corinth was that some wild, chaotic behavior was happening in the church meetings. Apparently people were getting worked up into an ecstatic frenzy in their worship, and some mistook this for the activity of the Holy Spirit. The problem is that in this state people, claiming to be speaking by the Holy Spirit, were teaching things that were not biblical … such as "Jesus be cursed."

And this is a clue as to an issue Paul will deal with later, and that is the confusion that existed in the church over certain things that were happening in the church that were attributed to the Holy Spirit, that really were not of the Holy Spirit. Specifically this has to do with "speaking in tongues." We'll get into that later.

And this is why we must be knowledgeable. Are there abuses? Yes. Is there confusion? Sure. But for now, here is what I want you to see. The "Spirit Way" of life is an amazing life. It is the life we've always wanted deep down inside. It's the source of power we've always needed as we face the challenges life puts on us.

Note: I'm convicted that as evangelicals and as Baptists that we spend so much of our time and energy reacting against the abuses of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual gifts, that we miss

out on the joy of living "in" and "by" the Holy Spirit and the tremendous life that results from that.

I'm afraid that what has happened for many of us is that we have heard about the craziness that has gone on in the name of the Holy Spirit, and so we've decided, this is too dangerous … this life in the Spirit and by the Spirit is too risky. I'm just going to stay away from that, and consequently we miss the power … we miss the exhilaration of life in and by the Spirit of God.

So let me just show you from the New Testament how we are to relate to the Holy Spirit in the proper way. So we can experience life and ministry "in the Spirit" and "by the Spirit."

Question: How do we get really plugged into the Holy Spirit. How do you activate the ministry of the Holy Spirit in your life and in the church? As we go farther into the study of spiritual gifts we will see exactly what they look like and what they accomplish in the lives of others and how they bring glory to God. But we first need to see how we plug into the Holy Spirit and how we relate to Him.

I want to show you in a "fly over" fashion what the NT teaches us about how connect to and stay connected to the third Person of the Trinity … the Holy Spirit:

1. DON'T <u>RESIST</u> THE SPIRIT (Acts 7:51).

God reaches out to and speaks to people by His Spirit. Turn to Acts 7:51. (You'll need to keep your Bibles ready here. We'll look at several passages.) When Stephen was preaching his powerful message before the Jewish leaders, he comes down to the last and drives home the truth.

Acts 7:51 - "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!

The word "resist" means literally "to fall or strive against." It's a present tense verb which means there is ongoing, continuous resistance to God's speaking to them through his Spirit.

What were they guilty of? They were guilty of trying to stifle and silence any way that God would try to speak to them.

This is Stephen's message before the religious leaders in Jerusalem. These were the people who had every benefit of God's revelation. But they refused to listen.

John 16:8 (NIV) - When he (the Holy Spirit) **comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment…**

You see, non-believers resist the Holy Spirit when they hear the Gospel and feel the conviction of God's Spirit that they are lost and facing eternal judgment, and then willfully push against that truth.

Do believers resist the Spirit? Well, yes we may. When God reveals Himself or His will to us in Scripture, or when He firmly impresses upon us that we need to take a particular course of action, and then we harden our hearts to that, we are resisting the Holy Spirit as we are resisting God's will for our lives.

Now the opposite of this is seen in the next way we are to relate to the Spirit.

2. <u>RECEIVE</u> THE SPIRIT (Acts 2:38; Gal.3:14).

I think about when the people in Jerusalem saw the Holy Spirit come upon the believers at Pentecost. The people were moved with conviction and asked, "What must we do?"

> **Acts 2:38 - Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

Galatians 3:14 (NIV) - By faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

That word "receive" points to faith and trust. The working of the Holy Spirit is to be received by faith.

ILLUSTRATION – Someone has likened the Holy Spirit to a butterfly, which, when pursued, is always just beyond your grasp, but which, if you sit down quietly, may alight upon you. And it's like that with the Spirit of God. He is not seized. He is received.

As I said last week, this is what happens when we yield to the conviction of the Spirit in our hearts and put our trust in Christ. What happens is that we are, in effect, receiving into our lives the Holy Spirit of God and Christ.

Now there's another way that the New Testament talks about this.

3. DON'T <u>QUENCH</u> THE SPIRIT (I Thess.5:19).

Turn to I Thess.5:19. The Holy Spirit's activity is often described with the image of fire. Remember when the Holy Spirit first came upon those believers at Pentecost they saw what looked like flames leaping on the heads of those present.

And if the Holy Spirit is often represented by fire, then what we have to be careful about is quenching the Holy Spirit. That phrase is found in …

1 Thessalonians 5:19 (KJV) - Quench not the Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 5:19 (The Message) - Don't suppress the Spirit,

1 Thessalonians 5:19 (NIV) - Do not put out the Spirit's fire;

So how can this happen? It means to try to stop something that the Spirit is doing. Now I may not understand what's happening, but who am I to try to stop something that the Spirit of God is doing.

Now let's look at the context.

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 (NIV) - Do not put out the Spirit's fire; [20] do not treat prophecies with contempt. [21] Test everything. Hold on to the good. [22] Avoid every kind of evil.

It seems that the direct application of this command was to not treat with contempt the prophecies that come to the church. Are you open to God speaking to you through His Word and through those whom God has gifted to preach and apply His word to your life?

Rather than quenching the Holy Spirit's fire, I need to let it ignite my life. Where is the fire of God's Spirit burning? It's burning in the Word of God. Get as close to it as possible. It is burning in the fellowship of the church. Get as close to it as possible. It is burning in the presence of God in worship. Get as close to it as possible. Let it catch you on fire.

ILLUSTRATION – The problem for some of us is that we have appointed ourselves as God's volunteer fire department. We ready to put out anything that we don't understand, or anything that makes us a little uncomfortable. We keep our little spiritual fire-extinguisher at the ready.

We stifle the Spirit by scoffing at what He is doing. Note: I've been guilty of this too many times, by despising or treating with contempt the working of God in another person's life. Am I to be discerning? Certainly! That's what v.21 says. But I need to also "hold on to the good."

But there's something else we see about how the Holy Spirit's life and ministry can be activated in us.

4. DON'T GRIEVE THE SPIRIT (Eph.4:30).

The Bible says that the Holy Spirit can be grieved. Open your Bibles with me to Ephesians 4:30.

Ephesians 4:30 - And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

To grieve someone is to cause or to bring them sorrow. Now, only a loved one or dear friend can be grieved. A stranger might be annoyed. An acquaintance might be perplexed. A business colleague might be offended. But a loved one can be grieved.

Again, we need to look at the context. And as we do we see that the admonition to not grieve the Holy Spirit of God is sandwiched between statements about healthy relationships … destructive talk, bitterness, rage, hatred, etc. This grieves the Holy Spirit who is God's seal of ownership upon our lives.

Ephesians 4:29-32 (NIV) - Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. [30] And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. [31] Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every

form of malice. [32] Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Do you want to know where this happens more than anywhere else? It's not in the boardroom, or in the classroom, or in the worship room. It happens most in the living room and the other rooms of our homes where families relate to each other.

The Holy Spirit is grieved when there is dissention among the people of God. The Holy Spirit is grieved when we treat others in any way other than the way of love. Note: The Spirit Way, as we will see when we get to I Corinthians 13 is the way of love.

But let's keep moving. Another way we relate to the Spirit is to …

5. <u>LIVE</u> BY THE SPIRIT (Gal.5:16,18,25).

Galatians 5:16 - So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

"Live by the Spirit" means literally "to keep on walking by the Spirit."

Galatians 5:18 (NIV) - But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

Remember the story I told last week about a runner keeping their eye on the pace coach, and not on the mile-markers and the stopwatch. In my own strength I can never be righteous. It's only as I depend upon the Holy Spirit's work in my life as I am led by Him that I will fulfill the righteousness God requires.

Galatians 5:25 - Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

ILLUSTRATION – Have you ever been in the airport, walking down the concourse, lugging your luggage, huffing and puffing to get to your flight. And you look over and you see this guy walking next to you. He's walking at the same pace you're walking, but he seems to be getting there a lot faster than you are. Then you look more closely and you realize he's getting some help. He's walking on one of those moving sidewalks … a flat escalator.

> When we walk in the Spirit, he comes underneath us and bears us along. We're still walking, but we walk dependent on him.

6. BE <u>FILLED</u> WITH THE SPIRIT (Eph.5:18).

Ephesians 5:18 - Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

Literally, "keep on being filled" or "be being filled."

Now we come back to where we started.

1 Corinthians 12:2-3 (NIV) - You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. [3] Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

ILLUSTRATION – You've heard about people are arrested for D.U.I. … driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

That's what the Bible says in Eph.5:18. Do not be under the influence of alcoholic beverages, but instead by filled with the Holy Spirit.

Don't be DUI. Be LUI … living under the influence of the Holy Spirit. That's what it means to stay filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now how do you do that? Let me give you three words:

- Remove any known sin.
- Release every area of your life to God.
- Receive the fresh filling of the Spirit of God.