

Topic 11: The Holy Spirit

Your Indwelling Counselor and Guide

“But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

—John 14:26



No doubt you’ve heard people speak of the “Holy Ghost.” Maybe you were confused. If so, you’re not alone. The “Holy Ghost” is another name for the “Holy Spirit.” And if that isn’t confusing enough, even among those who love Jesus and are seeking to follow him, there are questions and uncertainty about the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

Since a disciple of Jesus Christ needs a proper understanding of the Holy Spirit, let’s turn our attention to the third person of the trinity.

“You have a glorious helper—the Holy Ghost—and by his power you may accomplish miracles of holiness.”—Charles Spurgeon

And since a disciple of Jesus needs to be able to use God’s Word (2 Timothy 2:15), let’s have you look up a number of Bible passages that reveal important truths about the nature and activity of the Holy Spirit.

Our prayer is that when we’re done, you’ll have less confusion and more understanding about the one, apart from whom, there can be no spiritual life and no spiritual growth.





Bible Study

The Deity of the Holy Spirit: God . . . or something less?

Look up the following passages and jot down in the central column what they teach about God's Holy Spirit. Then, in the right hand column, write down a personal application or implication of this truth.

Scripture reference	What the Bible says about the Spirit	What this means to us
Acts 5:3-4		
2 Corinthians 3:18		
Hebrews 9:14		
1 Corinthians 2:10		

The Personality of the Holy Spirit: Is the Spirit a "person" or not?

By saying that the Holy Spirit is a "person," we don't mean that he has a human body, but that he has the characteristics of personhood: intelligence, a moral code, rationality, a sense of self, emotions, and so on. Some say that the Holy Spirit is not a person at all, but instead a force or power—a "thing." Read the passages below and decide for yourself.

Scripture reference	What the Bible says about the Spirit	What this means to us
John 16:13-14		
Ephesians 4:30		
1 Corinthians 12:11		
Romans 8:26		



Further evidence of the personhood of the Holy Spirit is that the Bible tells us:

- ▶ the Holy Spirit possesses intelligence (Isaiah 11:2).
- ▶ the Holy Spirit is distinguishable from mere power (Acts 10:38; 1 Corinthians 2:4).
- ▶ the Holy Spirit loves (Romans 15:30).
- ▶ the Holy Spirit is included in the Trinitarian formula with the two persons of the “Father” and the “Son.”

The Names of the Holy Spirit: What do they reveal?

This is not, by any means, a complete list, but consider what these names and titles tell us about the Holy Spirit.

Scripture reference	What the Bible says about the Spirit	What this means to us
Hebrews 10:29		
John 14:16, 26		
Romans 8:15		
1 Peter 1:10-11		

In the Upper Room (see John 13–17) on the night before his crucifixion, Jesus spoke important last words to his disciples and prayed for them. Among the reassurances he gave them was a promise to send “another Helper” (John 14:16, 26 *NASB, ESV*). The Greek word is *paraklete*, which literally means “one called alongside.” The King James Version renders this word “Comforter”; the New International Version and the New Living Translation translate it “Advocate.”

“Every time we say we believe in the Holy Spirit, we mean we believe that there is a living God able and willing to enter human personality and change it.”—John Owen

1. What has been your understanding and experience of the Holy Spirit up until now?



The Works of the Holy Spirit: What exactly does the Spirit do?

Here we want to get a broad, but accurate sense of the many ministries of the Holy Spirit. Look up the passages listed, and jot down what you discover about his work.

Scripture reference	What the Bible says the Spirit does	What this means to me
Genesis 1:1-3		
2 Peter 1:21		
Luke 1:35		
John 16:8		
Titus 3:5		
Ephesians 1:13-14		
Ephesians 2:18		
1 Corinthians 6:19		
1 Corinthians 12:13		
Romans 8:14		
Romans 8:16		
Romans 8:26-27		
Romans 15:16		
John 16:12-14		
1 Corinthians 12:7-11		
Acts 13:4		
Ephesians 5:18		
Galatians 5:16-17		
Galatians 5:22-23		
Philippians 3:3		



We see from this brief survey, that in the eternal plan of God, the Holy Spirit is instrumental to our salvation. He is the one who regenerates—gives new life to—those who are spiritually dead (John 3:3–7; Titus 3:5). He then moves into the lives of believers (1 Corinthians 6:19), giving us the power to live as we should. He seals us, guaranteeing us heaven (Ephesians 1:13) after this life. What’s more he unites us permanently with Christ and his body (1 Corinthians 12:13).

The Spirit does so much more: leading, reassuring, convicting of sin, empowering, making us holy, praying for us. And in a confusing world, he serves as our ever-present teacher and guide. Look at what John 16:13–14 says:

“The Spirit of truth . . . will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.”

How amazing! We have not only been given the Bible—a treasure chest full of infinite Truth, but God has also given us a divine tutor to guide us in our study of God’s Word. It is only as we diligently and humbly search the Word, under the leadership of the Spirit, that we find ourselves being directed and led in healthy, God-honoring ways.

“I firmly believe that the moment our hearts are emptied of selfishness and ambition and self-seeking and everything that is contrary to God’s law, the Holy Spirit will come and fill every corner of our hearts.

“But if we are full of pride and conceit, ambition and self-seeking, pleasure and the world, there is no room for the Spirit of God. I also believe that many a man is praying to God to fill him, when he is full already with something else.

“Before we pray that God would fill us, I believe we ought to pray that He would empty us. There must be an emptying before there can be a filling; and when the heart is turned upside down, and everything that is contrary to God is turned out, then the Spirit will come.”
—Dwight L. Moody

2. Followers of Jesus are called to “follow the Spirit’s leading” in every part of life (Galatians 5:25, *NLT*). What does that process look like in your life?



3. What's the most surprising or most encouraging takeaway for you from this study of the Holy Spirit?

In a nutshell, disciples of Jesus believe:

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity who initiates and superintends spiritual life and growth in those who trust Christ and follow him.

Take-Home Reflections

Examine the chart below which shows characteristics that each person in the Trinity share.

Divine Attributes	Father	Son	Holy Spirit
Eternal	Romans 16:26-27	Revelation 1:12-17	Hebrews 9:14
Creator of all things	Psalms 100:3	Colossians 1:15-16	Psalms 104:30
Omnipresent (capable of being all places at once)	Jeremiah 23:24	Ephesians 1:20-23	Psalms 139:7
Omniscient (knows all things)	1 John 3:20	John 21:17	1 Corinthians 2:10
Wills and acts supernaturally	Ephesians 1:3-5	Matthew 8:3	1 Corinthians 12:7-11
Gives life	Genesis 1:11-31; see also John 5:21	John 1:4; see also John 5:21	Romans 8:10-11
Strengthens believers	Psalms 138:3	Philippians 4:13	Ephesians 3:16
Savior, salvation	Psalms 62:1	Acts 4:12	Titus 3:3-5



Life Application

An important part of discipleship is learning how to apply God’s truths to your life. Below are just a few ways you can start thinking about what you’ve learned and apply it to your daily life.

1. Memorize our memory verse, John 14:26.

“But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

2. Read Ephesians 5:15–21 for an intriguing look at what a “Spirit-filled” Christian looks like. Jot down some of your impressions here:

3. Wrestle with one or two of these questions:

- ▶ What are some difficult decisions you are facing now? How can you rely on the Word of Truth (Colossians 1:5) and the Spirit of Truth (John 16:13) to find the guidance you need?
- ▶ What do these verses mean and how do we obey them? “Do not stifle the Holy Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5:19, NLT), “and do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live” (Ephesians 4:30, NLT).
- ▶ What are some ways you sense the Spirit of God “convicting” you lately—trying to get your attention, seeking to get you to adjust your thinking or actions?