

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead. He is the One who guides us into a closer walk with Christ.

The Holy Spirit is fully God, more than an influence or a force. He has the personhood and mind of God, and performs a special duty to help us connect with God the Father. The Spirit also guides us in our lives.

He was sent by Christ as the personal presence of God for those dwelling on earth. When received, the Spirit will transform your life to reflect Jesus Christ.

Let's take a closer look at:

- The Holy Spirit's identity and role in the Trinity
- The Holy Spirit's influence in the writing of the Bible
- The Holy Spirit's role in Jesus' earthly ministry
- How the Holy Spirit works with us

God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in Creation, incarnation, and redemption. He is as much a person as are the Father and the Son. He inspired the writers of Scripture. He filled Christ's life with power. He draws and convicts human beings; and those who respond He renews and transforms into the image of God. Sent by the Father and the Son to be always with His children, He extends spiritual gifts to the church, empowers it to bear witness to Christ, and in harmony with the Scriptures leads it into all truth. (Gen. 1:1, 2; 2 Sam. 23:2; Ps. 51:11; Isa. 61:1; Luke 1:35; 4:18; John 14:16-18, 26; 15:26; 16:7-13; Acts 1:8; 5:3; 10:38; Rom. 5:5; 1 Cor. 12:7-11; 2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Peter 1:21.)

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS PART OF THE TRINITY

When you look to scripture, it's clear that the Holy Spirit is a part of the triune God. The term God is inclusive of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; we see this in the great commission of Matthew 28:18-20.

Jesus implores His disciples to go and preach the Gospel to all the world, baptizing them in the name of God. Yet, Jesus says it this way: "*Go therefore... baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*" (Matthew 28:19).

Furthermore you see the Spirit acting as God as He takes part in the creation. For, "*the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.*" (Genesis 1:2). And "*By His Spirit He adorned the heavens*" (Job 26:13).

This all alludes to the fact that the Holy Spirit is a personal presence; it reminds us that God is a personal God. When Jesus ascended to heaven after His time on earth He left us "*Another comforter*" (John 14:16).

This in itself is a testament to the personality of the Holy Spirit; for the word Comforter, in the original greek, simply means "Helper." The word "another" denotes one who will come to take the place of Christ (the first comforter) on earth.

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S ROLE IN FORMING THE SCRIPTURES

The Bible says in 2 Timothy 3:16, "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God...*" The scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation, were guided by the Holy Spirit.

This means nothing written in the Bible was written without the guidance of the Holy Spirit. For we are told that, "*Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*" (1 Peter 1:20,21).

Moreover, we're given the report that when David wrote the psalms, He was "*in the Spirit*" (Mark 12:36).

It was the Holy Spirit who led in the writing of the scriptures. And it is the Spirit who leads in the interpretation of the scriptures (John 16:13, 1 Corinthians 2:14).

THE HOLY SPIRIT SUSTAINED JESUS IN HIS EARTHLY MINISTRY

In the book of John, you will find some interesting words come from the lips of Christ, "*I can of my own self do nothing...*" (John 5:30, NKJV). Remember, Jesus is the mighty God (Isa 9:6). He had a prime role in creation (John 1:3), He is the all-powerful – so these words can sound at least a little surprising.

If by Himself He could do nothing, then where did He receive His power? The Bible gives us insight on this point; it was in the power of the Spirit that Jesus ministered on earth (Luke 4:14). You can see this point noted all throughout the gospels.

For instance, when Jesus first started His ministry – the Spirit anointed Him as Messiah (Luke 3:22, Acts 10:38).

As Christ went about in His work, He would heal, bind up, cast out demons, and bring sight to the blind. He was able to do all these things because the "Spirit of the Lord" was upon Him (Luke 4:18; Matthew 12:28). This is how Christ found strength, it was through the Spirit.

By not relying on Himself for strength, Christ prepared the way for humanity. As the Spirit guided Christ, He is now given for our guidance (John 16:13). As He gave Christ strength, we can receive the same (Zechariah 4:6). Here we find a valuable point to remember, Christ was our example (1 Peter 2:21, 1 John 2:6).

HOW DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT WORK WITH US?

1. THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVEN TO CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS.

In the book of Acts, you can witness the disciples filled with the Spirit. They spoke in different languages and preached powerful sermons. They testified to the love of God! This was the fulfilment of Christ's great promise, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper" (John 14:16, NASB).

The presence of the Holy Spirit was quintessential. It was better for Christ's followers than if Jesus Himself were to continue with them (John 16:7). So, what makes the Holy Spirit's presence so important?

2. THE HOLY SPIRIT CONVICTS YOU OF SIN AND RIGHTEOUSNESS (JOHN 16:8).

As you draw closer to God, you will see your sinfulness in the light of Christ's righteous life.

Christ revealed to humanity an example of a pure and holy life (1 Peter 2:22). The Spirit's work is for you to behold His life, His goodness, and see your hopeless state. This is for the purpose that you may be led to repentance (Romans 2:4). It is the conviction of sin, and Christ's righteousness, that leads you to salvation. And it is through the salvation experience that you will begin to grow through the Spirit.

3. THE SPIRIT LEADS THE CHRISTIAN INTO TRUTH (JOHN 16:13).

When the Spirit leads into truth, He leads into a correct understanding of the scriptures (John 17:17). Moreover, central to the scriptures is a correct knowledge of Christ (John 5:39). This is a fundamental part of the work of the Holy Spirit.

4. THE SPIRIT LEADS YOU INTO THE PEACE THAT IS YOURS THROUGH REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." (Romans 8:1).

Those who are in Christ are walking according to the Spirit and are without condemnation. This is peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). You can claim the promise that, *"...All who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons" and daughters "of God."* (Romans 8:14, NASB). What great news for us! Our life can be filled with joy and peace, abounding in hope, all through the Spirit (Romans 15:13)!

5. THE SPIRIT INTERPRETS OUR PRAYERS (ROMANS 8:26).

When we seek God earnestly, oftentimes we may not know exactly what to pray for. The beautiful work of the Holy Spirit is to intercede on behalf of God's children. By this God makes *"all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His Purpose."* (Romans 8:28)

6. THE SPIRIT WRITES GOD'S LAW IN OUR HEARTS (HEB 8:10).

When the Holy Spirit comes upon the follower of Christ, His presence is not only over them, but within them (1 Corinthians 3:16). It is His work, while dwelling in us, to write the law of God on our hearts (Jer 31:33; 2 Corinthians 3:3). This is synonymous in scripture with filling our hearts with the love of God (Romans 5:5).

7. THE SPIRIT GIVES STRENGTH TO TESTIFY OF CHRIST (JOHN 15:26).

When the Spirit dwells in you, His main desire is for your life to reflect the life of Christ. The Bible puts it this way, *"that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith"* (Ephesians 3:16,17).

The Spirit strengthens us so Christ can dwell in our hearts by faith. His life, His character, His love—more and more each day—placed in His people.

What a powerful promise. Christ in the heart; for whatever is in our heart will be revealed in our life (Proverbs 4:22). This is the result of Holy Spirit Baptism.

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

To be baptized by the Holy Spirit means to receive power in the Christian life to witness for Christ (Acts 1:8).

John the baptist was preaching and preparing the way for the messiah (Jesus) when he said these words, “... *I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*” (Matthew 3:11).

These words pointed forward to the day of pentecost. It was on this day (Acts 2) that Christ “baptized” His followers with the Holy Spirit. Later on, the boldness of the apostles was upsetting the rulers. As a result, those of the temple “*realized that they had been with Jesus.*” (Acts 4:13). At this point in time, Jesus was in heaven – no longer physically dwelling with His disciples.

It was through the Holy Spirit that they were able to hold communion with Him. What the priests saw in these apostles was the life of Christ in His followers. It is the same Spirit which sustained Christ, and raised Him from the dead, which is to give his followers life (Romans 8:11).

God desires to baptize you with the Holy Spirit. The word baptized in the original greek text is “baptizo” – it means to be fully immersed. Not just a little bit, but completely. On the day of Pentecost we see that the disciples were “filled” with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4). Not just half-filled, but completely filled.

To be baptized, or filled, with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19), we must first allow God to empty us of the things contrary to His word. Just as you cannot fill a milk carton with water until it is emptied of its contents. Similarly, we cannot be filled with the Spirit until we allow God to do His work through the Spirit. This is called the “sanctification of the Spirit” (1 Peter 1:2). Christ is simply waiting for entrance so He may begin this process (Revelation 3:20).

Day by day, you and I are to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, so as we interact with those around us, they may see we too have been with Jesus.

RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT

God desires for you to receive the Holy Spirit. He is actually eager to give it! For many, it can be hard to know whether or not they have the Holy Spirit. Scripture gives us the confidence in God’s promise to give it to those who simply ask and seek for it.

Let’s direct our focus to few more simple outlines for receiving the Holy Spirit:

1. Luke 11:13 – God is more than ready to give us the Spirit.
2. Luke 11:8,13 – We must desire the Spirit: ask, seek, knock.
3. Acts 5:32 – The Spirit is given to those who decide they want to live in obedience to God.

4. Zechariah 4:6 – You are to rely on the Spirit daily for empowerment as a Christian.

We are also told that although we can't see the Spirit, just like the wind, we can see its effects (John 3:8).

Those who are daily seeking for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit will produce the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-26). They will testify to the work of the Holy Spirit. The way they treat others in their thoughts, words, and actions will uplift Christ.

The Holy Spirit is important to Adventists, as He is the greatest need for their spiritual life. It is through the Spirit that they are able to experience a closer walk with Jesus. Through the Holy Spirit, the Christian can find freedom, healing and hope for today.

WHEN WE CONSIDER THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, A STRANGE PARADOX CONFRONTS US.

On one hand, we find silence in many theological works, with only a passing reference to the subject in connection with the question of the Trinity. On the other hand, we find an increasing interest in the work of the Holy Spirit. The Pentecostal movement and the subsequent waves of charismatic Christianity have led Christians to a new awareness of the Spirit and His gifts in the lives of believers. Here, the focus centers on the work of the Holy Spirit in us—the spiritual gifts that empower us in our ministries. Much of this interest in the Holy Spirit is motivated by the benefits we gain from the Holy Spirit. However, we have to remind ourselves that the Bible is first and foremost about God and not about us or our spiritual potential. Even the spiritual gifts we receive are God's gifts (1 Cor. 12:11). Therefore, it is appropriate to study the Holy Spirit and His work from a biblical and theocentric focus.

But here is the challenge: Scripture itself does not present the Spirit in any methodical or structured way. Perhaps this has to do, in part, with a peculiar characteristic of the Holy Spirit: His behind-the-scenes role.

THE BEHIND-THE-SCENES ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In the Bible, the Holy Spirit does not seek to be the center of attention. He plays more of a behind-the-scenes role in the Trinity. The Holy Spirit promotes and mediates the presence and Lordship of Jesus Christ through His presence in our lives. James Packer has aptly said, "The Spirit's message to us is never, 'Look at me; listen to me; come to me; get to know me,' but always, 'Look at him and see him, and see his glory; get to know him, and hear his word; go to him, and have life; get to know him, and taste his gift of joy and peace.'" In our sinful world of egocentricity and self-promotion, the beauty of the Spirit lies not in self-display, but in divine selflessness. "For this reason believers are rightly called 'Christians' not 'Pneumians.'" Thus, the Holy Spirit teaches us humility in giving glory to God the Father through Jesus Christ, His Son.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

The Holy Spirit also plays a pivotal role in our knowing God. The apostle Paul states that the Holy Spirit searches even the depths of God (1 Cor. 2:10, 11). He knows God as no other being does. He not only has unique access to God, He is God Himself, a Member of the Triune God. For this reason, the Holy Spirit is uniquely fitted to reveal God and His will to us in a trustworthy and authoritative manner. To know the God of the Bible means that

we have to rely upon God who made Himself known to us through His Spirit in His Word. In a sense, the Holy Spirit is the epistemological basis for knowing God.

GOD'S SPECIAL REVELATION AND INSPIRATION

The special revelations of God and His will for humanity in Scripture result from the work of the Holy Spirit. All Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16), and no prophetic word can be brought forth by human invention (2 Pet. 1:20, 21). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth (John 14:16, 17; 15:26), who brings God's words to reliable remembrance. The Holy Spirit moved biblical writers in such a way that what they wrote in their own words was nevertheless God's Word and carried divine authority (1 Thess. 2:13). But even though the Holy Spirit inspired biblical writers to record faithfully what God had revealed, the result is not a book primarily about the Holy Spirit but about Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Luke 24:25–27, 44–45; John 16:14; 15:26; Acts 5:32; 1 John 4:2).

The close link between the Holy Spirit and the Bible lies at the foundation of the Protestant principle of authority. According to Bernard Ramm, "The proper principle of authority within the Christian church must be . . . the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures, which are the product of the Spirit's revelatory and inspiring action." The Bible is authoritative because it is the vehicle through which God has chosen to speak to us through the work of the Spirit.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND SCRIPTURE

Calvin has pointed out forcefully that the Holy Spirit confirms the witness and establishes the inviolate authority of the Scriptures. Calvin called this the internal witness of the Spirit (*testimonium Spiritus sancti internum*). This witness is stronger than any human reason. Scripture is thus self-authenticated. This assurance does not come by any rational process but rather is received in faith. The Holy Spirit establishes the assurance of the trustworthiness of Scripture in the life of the believer.

To have the sure Word of God is not enough; it must be followed by the embrace of, and obedience to, the Word. Thus, revelation, inspiration, proper understanding and obedience to the revealed Word, all come from the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit, there is no appreciation of, or affection for, the divine message. Without the Spirit, faith and love are missing in our responses to the message of Scripture. We need the Holy Spirit to enable us to understand what He has inspired (cf. 1 Cor. 2:12, 14, 15; Eph. 1:17–19; Ps. 119:18).

The Holy Spirit's work with Scripture did not end in the distant past. He continues to speak to people through the Bible today, making the Word come alive as He helps us understand the significance and relevance of the biblical text for our lives in the present. "The Spirit was not given . . . to supersede the Bible; . . . the word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested."

By embracing the scriptural Word as trustworthy and true, we are led by the Spirit to accept the Living Word of God, Jesus Christ, as our Savior and Lord.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND CHRIST

The Holy Spirit was active and instrumental not only in the Written Word of God but also in the Incarnate Word. The Spirit prepared the way of the Messiah through prophets. More significantly "the conception of the Messiah is Spiritcrafted." The Holy Spirit is the One responsible for the conception of Jesus Christ in the virgin Mary: " 'The Holy Spirit will

come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you' ” (Luke 1:35). The result? The One who is thus born is called “that holy thing” (Luke 1:35), signifying that Jesus is indeed the Son of the Holy One, the Son of God, truly divine and truly human.

PROVIDING THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

The Holy Spirit also gives assurance of our salvation through Jesus Christ. He bears “witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:16). He gives evidence of God’s work in us. “And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us” (1 John 3:24). The Spirit gives us assurance of our adoption as God’s children. He is a Witness and Seal that confirms our standing in Christ (2 Cor. 1:21, 22; Eph. 1:13, 14; 4:30).

The Holy Spirit is the agent of this sealing and the guarantee that God will bring to completion what He has begun in us (Phil. 1:6). Hence, the apostle Paul states that all of God’s promises are Yes in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20), who “anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come” (2 Cor. 1:21, 22). This sealing implies a moral dimension: to walk in the way of holiness that accompanies the sealing of the Spirit. Hence, the admonition not to “grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Eph. 4:30–32; cf. 2 Tim. 2:19). In other words, living in the Spirit means a life of spiritual and moral congruity with what Scripture teaches (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17).

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND NEW BIRTH

Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:5, 6). Paul affirms that without the working of the Holy Spirit, we cannot experience regeneration and renewal (Titus 3:5). Indeed, as we are led by the Spirit of God, we become the children of God (Rom. 8:14). The Spirit awakens sinful and dead hearts (Eph. 2:1; Ezek. 36:26, 27) and opens our blind eyes (Acts 26:18; 2 Cor. 4:4). He does this by awakening in us an awareness of our sin (John 16:8) and convicting us of our lostness and need for a Savior.

SANCTIFICATION AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

The Holy Spirit desires to make us holy as God is holy. For this reason, He cleanses us from sin and sanctifies us. The apostle Paul writes, “You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11). The Spirit produces in us lifelong growth in holiness, bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit within us—“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal. 5:22, 23). He enables us to live victoriously by God’s grace. Our being changed into His likeness “comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18). Sanctification and the joy of obedience come through the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2; cf. Rom. 8:4; 15; 16).

MISSION AND EVANGELISM

The Holy Spirit also empowers believers for mission and evangelism. He provides the essential strength for the mission of the church (Acts 1:8; Rom. 15:18, 19). The Holy Spirit

calls forth persons to be bearers of God's mission (Acts 13:2, 3). He guides and directs missionaries to specific places to be witnesses for God and to labor for the church (Acts 16:6–8). He equips the believers to proclaim effectively the everlasting gospel throughout the whole world. He leads people to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior and to be obedient to the Written Word of God. God has devised that His gospel message should go out into the world through His disciples who have received the Holy Spirit. However, a worldwide mission can be successfully accomplished only if the church is united, and here the Holy Spirit performs another significant theological task.

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

The Holy Spirit unites us in many ways. First of all, He brings us to Jesus Christ, our Savior, and unites us with Him. According to Calvin, “the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to himself.” Being united with Christ “is, in fact, the foundation of all the blessings of salvation. Justification, sanctification, adoption and glorification are all received through our being united to Christ.” This work of the Holy Spirit on the individual level leads to a specific community of faith—the church. Having experienced salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, there is a fellowship of the Holy Spirit in the church (2 Cor. 13:14; Phil. 2:1, 2). The church needs to be understood as a faith community that is called into being by the Spirit. Thus, individual believers are built into a new spiritual house of God “in the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22).

As followers of Christ, we should be “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). We are also baptized by one Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). The Holy Spirit unites us in baptism into one body; hence the church as a community of faith is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16, 17; Eph. 2:19–22). Furthermore, the Holy Spirit actively supports and sustains the various members of the body of Christ by giving special spiritual gifts. Different gifts, given by “one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills” (1 Cor. 12:11), work together “for the common good” (v. 7) so that the body of Christ is well equipped to fulfill its God-given task to proclaim the everlasting gospel to a perishing world. Since the Holy Spirit bestows His gifts as He wills, it is wrong to expect one single spiritual gift to be present in all believers.

The Holy Spirit produces love in our hearts (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22; Col. 1:8), and this love “binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Col. 3:14). In such a loving and spiritual unity, there is neither male nor female, neither slave nor free, neither Jew nor Greek, neither black nor white, neither rich nor poor: all are one in Christ Jesus, through the work of the Spirit (Gal. 3:28). We often credit human beings in leadership positions with the ability to plant, establish, and maintain churches. We should not forget, however, that at a deeper level the very existence of the church depends upon the Holy Spirit. We may seek unity and peace and do everything to avoid strife and discord among the members of the church; but true and lasting unity ultimately is the Spirit's work. We are just His humble servants and should not hinder His influence. The theological foundation for the unity of the church is the work of the Spirit through the Written Word of God that He inspired. The Spirit of Christ who dwells in Christians never leads us to doubt, criticize, go beyond, or fall short of biblical teachings. The Holy Spirit works with the Bible to make it the living Word of God, which can transform our lives.

In summary, the Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Godhead, working harmoniously with God the Father and God the Son in our Creation and our salvation. The Holy Spirit awakens us from spiritual death, brings forth an awareness of our sinfulness and lostness,

kindles a desire for change, and leads us to Jesus Christ. He gives us assurance of salvation. He conforms us to be more like Jesus. He keeps us faithful in our walk with God. He enables us to fulfill God's will and mission. He generated the Written Word of God as our safe guide and only norm for the Christian life and doctrine. He unites the church on the basis of God's Word. Thanks be to God for His sublime presence in the Holy Spirit.