

# The Holy Spirit



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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *John 14:16–18; 14:26; 15:26; Matt. 12:31, 32; John 16:8; John 3:5–8; Luke 11:9–13.*

**Memory Text:** “ ‘And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever’ ” (*John 14:16, NKJV*).

Of the Three Persons of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit is the least understood. It is ironic that the Person who is closest to us, the Being who produces the new birth in us, who dwells in us and transforms us, is the One we know so little about.

Why? To begin with, the Bible is less explicit regarding the Holy Spirit than it is about the Father and the Son. There are many references to the Spirit in Scripture, but most are metaphoric or symbolic. The Bible gives us ample information about the work of the Spirit, but it says little about His nature.

Another reason arises from the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He is constantly trying to focus our attention on Christ, not on His own Person. In the plan of salvation, the Spirit plays a subordinated role, serving the Father and the Son, although this function does not imply inferiority in essence.

This week, as we listen to what Jesus taught about the Spirit, let us eagerly pray for His transforming presence in our lives.

\* *Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 19.*

## The Representative of Christ

With fear and sadness, the disciples listened as Jesus announced His imminent death. When they were deprived of His presence, who would be their Teacher, Friend, and Counselor? Knowing their desperate need, Christ promised to send His representative to be with them.

**What particular name did Christ use for His representative? See John 14:16–18. In what sense was that name so appropriate? See also John 14:26.**

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Helper, Counselor, and Comforter are various translations of the Greek *paraklētos*, which is made up of the preposition *para*, “beside,” and the adjective *klētos*, “called.” It literally means “one called to the side of,” giving the idea of “a person summoned to one’s aid.” It may refer to a mediator, an intercessor, a helper, an advisor, or even a legal advocate.

Only John uses the term *paraklētos* in the New Testament. Interestingly, he also applied this word to Jesus Himself (*1 John 2:1*).

During His earthly ministry, Christ was the disciples’ Counselor, Helper, and Comforter. Therefore, it is quite appropriate for His successor to receive the same name. The Holy Spirit is sent by the Father at the request of the Son, and in the name of the Son (*John 14:16, 26*). The Spirit continues Christ’s work on this earth.

Through the Holy Spirit the disciples had the presence of Jesus. “‘I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you’” (*vs. 18, NKJV*), said the Lord. He was not talking about paying them an occasional visit, which wouldn’t be of much comfort to helpless “orphans.” Rather, He was announcing a permanent and intimate relationship: “‘I in you’” (*vs. 20, NKJV*). This was going to be possible only through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Of course, Christ’s human nature hindered Him from being personally in every place at the same time. The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, is omnipresent (*Ps. 139:7*). By the Spirit, our Savior is accessible to all, independent of where people are or the physical distance that separates them from Christ.

**In what ways have you experienced the reality of the Holy Spirit, even though His nature and how He works in our lives is not easy to understand?**

## The Holy Spirit Is a Person

Ellen G. White wrote that “the nature of the Holy Spirit is a mystery. Men cannot explain it, because the Lord has not revealed it to them. . . . Regarding such mysteries, which are too deep for human understanding, silence is golden.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 52.

Nevertheless, she also affirmed that “the Holy Spirit is a person, for He beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. . . . He must also be a divine person, else He could not search out the secrets which lie hidden in the mind of God.”—Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, pp. 616, 617. This statement was based on the Bible (*Rom. 8:16 and 1 Cor. 2:10, 11*). So, although we are limited by our human nature, through the Scriptures we can at least know that the Holy Spirit is a Person and that He is Divine. What Jesus said about the Holy Spirit confirms this conclusion.

**What** are some of the actions of the Holy Spirit that show us He is a Person? See *John 14:26, 15:26, 16:7–14*.

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Jesus mentioned several activities the Spirit carries out, all of which imply a personality. Who better than a person can teach us and bring to our remembrance all the things that Christ said (*John 14:26*)? Or who better than a personal being can testify of Jesus (*John 15:26*), convict the world (*John 16:8*), guide us into all truth, and also hear and speak (*vs. 13*)?

Following the teachings of Jesus, the New Testament writers made it clear that the Holy Spirit has the essential characteristics of a person: will (*1 Cor. 12:11*), intelligence (*Acts 15:28, Rom. 8:27*), and emotions (*Rom. 15:30, Eph. 4:30*).

Because the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person, we must humbly surrender ourselves to His will and guidance. We will invite Him to dwell in our hearts (*Rom. 8:9*), to transform our lives (*Titus 3:5*), and to produce the fruit of the Spirit in our characters (*Gal. 5:22, 23*). On our own, we are helpless; only through His power working in us can we become what we have been promised in Jesus.

**The Holy Spirit is a gift; like most gifts, it can be rejected. How can you make sure, day by day, that you are not turning away from what the Holy Spirit seeks to do in your life?**

## The Holy Spirit Is Divine

When Jesus introduced the Holy Spirit to the disciples, He called Him “another” Helper (*John 14:16*). The Greek word Jesus used for “another” is *allos*, which means “another of the same kind,” in contrast with *heteros*, “another of different kind or quality.” The same likeness of nature that bonds the Father and the Son is revealed in the relationship between the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit “ ‘will tell you things to come’ ” (*John 16:13, NKJV*). Only a divine Being can announce the future (*Isa. 46:9, 10*).

The divinity of the Holy Spirit is also attested by His role in the inspiration of the Scriptures, a function that Jesus explicitly acknowledged. He argued that “ ‘David himself said by the Holy Spirit’ ” (*Mark 12:36, NKJV*) what is recorded in Psalm 110:1.

While on this earth, Jesus was constantly under the direction of the Holy Spirit. After being anointed by the Spirit in His baptism (*Matt. 3:16, 17*), He was “led by the Spirit into the wilderness” (*Luke 4:1, NKJV*). Victorious over the tempter, He “returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee” to carry on His ministry (*vs. 14, NKJV*). The miracles He performed were done through the Holy Spirit (*Matt. 12:28*). The fact that the Son of God depended on the Spirit is another demonstration of the divine character of the Spirit, for it’s hard to imagine the Son of God dependent upon anything less than the Divine.

Further evidence for the deity of the Spirit lies in His association with the Father and the Son in texts that mention the Three Persons as equal. Thus, Jesus commissioned the apostles to baptize the new disciples “ ‘in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’ ” (*Matt. 28:19, NKJV*).

**How** do the following verses help us to understand the divinity of the Holy Spirit? See *Matt. 12:31, 32*.

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The comparison between speaking against the Son of man, a sin that may be forgiven, and speaking against the Holy Spirit, a sin that cannot be forgiven, shows that the Spirit is not a common being. Blasphemy is a sin committed directly against God. Thus, we conclude that the Holy Spirit is One of the Three Persons of the Godhead. Though much has been written about the “unforgivable sin,” the immediate context shows people so hardened against the Spirit and His role in salvation that they attribute His work to the devil!

## The Work of the Holy Spirit

We have already mentioned the important role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the incarnated Christ and in the inspiration of Scripture. Let us focus now on what Jesus taught about the Spirit's work for our salvation.

**What indispensable work does the Holy Spirit do in order to prepare us to accept the Savior?** *See John 16:8.*

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Who takes their medicine unless they acknowledge that they are sick? By the same token, we cannot be saved unless we recognize that we are sinners. Softly but steadily the Holy Spirit convinces us that we have sinned, are guilty, and are under the righteous judgment of God.

Then the Spirit guides us to Christ, testifying about Him (*John 15:26*), the only One who can save us. Since Jesus is the Truth (*John 14:6*), by taking us to Jesus, the Spirit is also taking us "into all truth" (*John 16:13*). It could not be any other way; after all, the Holy Spirit is called "the Spirit of truth" (*John 14:17*).

Once we are convicted of sin (which implies repentance from our sins) and are directed to Jesus and His truth, we are ready for the Holy Spirit to do His greatest work.

**Why is it so crucial to be "born of the Spirit"?** *See John 3:5–8.*

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Those who have tried to reform their lives by themselves know how futile their efforts are. It is impossible for us, without divine intervention, to transform our deteriorated sinful lives into new beings. The regeneration of a sinner requires the kind of creative power that only the divine Holy Spirit can provide. We are saved "through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (*Titus 3:5, NKJV*). What the Spirit does is not a modification or improvement of the old life but a transformation of nature, the creation of a new life. The results of such a miracle are clearly visible and constitute an irrefutable argument in favor of the gospel.

The operation of the Holy Spirit is not necessary only at the beginning of our Christian life; we need Him constantly. To foster our spiritual growth, He teaches us and reminds us of all the things that Jesus taught (*John 14:26*). If we allow Him, He abides with us forever as our Helper, Comforter, and Counselor (*vs. 16*).

**Bad character habits are hard to change, are they not? And even when we stop, unless constantly vigilant, we can be overcome by them again, as well. What should our inherent weaknesses and propensities to sin tell us about our constant need to be surrendered to the Holy Spirit?**

## Filled With the Holy Spirit

No doubt, it is important to know who the Holy Spirit is. But this knowledge would be pointless unless it leads us to completely open our lives to be filled with Him. Jesus made it clear that if we fail to invite the presence of the heavenly Guest to abide in us daily, there is another kind of spirit that is eager to enter into the empty life and produce a spiritual disaster (*Matt. 12:43–45*). Jesus Himself was “filled with the Holy Spirit” (*Luke 4:1, NKJV*). “Daily He received a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 139.

**What** does Luke 11:9–13 tell us about the way we may receive the Holy Spirit? What do these verses show us regarding the Father’s willingness to give us the Holy Spirit?

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At the Last Supper, Jesus promised His disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit. He emphasized the Spirit’s comforting and teaching ministry, which was to meet their need at that time. After Christ’s resurrection, however, the context was different, and the disciples faced new challenges.

**What** was the focus of Jesus’ promise of the Holy Spirit after His resurrection? See *Acts 1:4–8*.

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Acts 1:5 contains the only record of Jesus talking about being “‘baptized with the Holy Spirit’” (*NKJV*). John the Baptist had announced this special baptism (*Matt. 3:11, John 1:33*), but it had to wait until Christ’s ascension. What does baptism with the Spirit mean?

In Acts 1:8, Jesus Himself explained this with a parallel expression. You are “baptized with the Holy Spirit” (*Acts 1:5, NKJV*) “when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (*vs. 8, NKJV*). To be baptized is to be totally immersed in something, usually water. It includes the whole person. Baptism with the Holy Spirit means to be totally under the influence of the Spirit, completely “filled with the Spirit” (*Eph. 5:18, NKJV*). This is not a “once and forever” experience, but is something that needs to be constantly renewed.

**If someone asked you, Have you ever been “filled with the Spirit,” what would you answer, and why?**

**Further Study:** Ellen G. White, “The Power Promised,” pp. 19–23, in *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8; “The Gift of the Spirit,” pp. 47–56, in *The Acts of the Apostles*.

“At all times and in all places, in all sorrows and in all afflictions, when the outlook seems dark and the future perplexing, and we feel helpless and alone, the Comforter will be sent in answer to the prayer of faith. Circumstances may separate us from every earthly friend; but no circumstance, no distance, can separate us from the heavenly Comforter. Wherever we are, wherever we may go, He is always at our right hand to support, sustain, uphold, and cheer.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 669, 670.

“The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He [Jesus] could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people. The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world’s Redeemer.”—Page 671.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 Given the human tendency to self-exaltation, what lessons does the humble and subordinate operation of the Holy Spirit teach us?
- 2 In dialogue with Nicodemus, Jesus compared the Spirit to the wind. What spiritual lessons may we learn from that comparison?
- 3 Some people claim that the evidence of being “filled with the Spirit” is to be able to speak in what is commonly referred to as “tongues.” How should we respond to this claim?
- 4 We tend to think of the work of the Holy Spirit on an individual, one-on-one basis, which is, of course, correct. At the same time, how can we, as a corporate body, experience the reality of His presence in our church as a whole?

## A River of Life

I'm a fourth-generation Seventh-day Adventist in the Czech Republic, the second-most atheistic country in Europe. Going to church was part of my life, like grocery shopping and eating. I enjoyed church because I had friends there, but I didn't have a relationship with God.

I had developed a rather twisted picture of God. Many other young people did, too, and lots of them stopped attending church when they enrolled in a university.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders prayed for a way to reach university-age people across the Czecho-Slovakian Union. God answered their prayers with INRI Road, which means "Jesus' way." It's a program primarily for university students.

When I began my university studies, a youth pastor invited me to attend INRI Road. It's like no church I've ever been to. Casual week-night meetings provide lots of opportunities to bond with other students. The program includes Bible studies, of course, but we can also join language conversation groups, sports teams, and other activities. I continued going because I enjoyed the fellowship.

Mark, the founder of INRI Road and leader of the group in the city where I am studying, asked me if I'd like to join the planning team for INRI Road. I agreed. We were encouraged to try our outreach ideas to see if they would work. And we have lots of smaller groups that make up INRI Road.

For instance, an Adventist girl studying medicine invited another Christian girl to pray amid the stacks of books in the library. Others joined them, and the group grew. They wanted a place to meet, and INRI Road invited them to join. This is typical of the way INRI Road is growing. Many members are not Adventists, but are friends.

I attend two Bible study groups, and the in-depth study we do has opened God's Word in new and amazing ways for me. I see how far God has taken me in my walk with Him. I'm learning to rely on God for everything. He is giving me opportunities to act on the lessons He's taught me and to share what I've learned with others.

I want to pass on what I'm learning about God and life and ministry to others. I want to help others see that their lives are a gift from God, a gift they're responsible to give to others. This realization has changed my life.

Last year INRI Road received part of a Thirteenth Sabbath Offering to help expand the program to other university cities, to train leaders, and to provide resources that will bring other young people to a knowledge of the Savior. Thank you for caring about the youth of Europe.

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