

# Relying On The Holy Spirit

*Experience the joy-filled walk with God under the anointing of the Holy Spirit.*

## WHO EXACTLY IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Have you ever seen a child stare in wide-eyed wonder as she listens to a new story? That's the way many people are when it comes to the Holy Spirit. They don't have a clue to His true identity or how He works in the life of every Christian. The Holy Spirit is a mystery to them.

Wide-eyed wonder is not a bad response to have to the Holy Spirit. Certainly, the Holy Spirit should inspire our awe, our wonder, our adoration. But the Holy Spirit does not desire to be a puzzle. He desires to reveal Himself to us and to be known by us.

Who, then, is the Holy Spirit? That's the focus of this lesson.

### **The Holy Spirit Is a Person**

One of the keys to your understanding about the Holy Spirit lies in your recognition that the Holy Spirit is not an "it"; He is a person.

Have you ever been asked, "Are you filled with the Holy Spirit? Do you have the Holy Spirit?" There is only one set of answers: yes or no. You can't have a little bit of the Holy Spirit. Either you have been filled by Him, or you haven't.

You can't have had Him once, but not have Him now. Either you have Him, or you've never had Him.

The error tends to come because we think of the Holy Spirit as a force, a power, an event, an experience, a manifestation.

I once had this view of the Holy Spirit. When I went to college to prepare for the ministry, I was in a conversation early in my freshman year in which the subject of the Holy Spirit came up. I must have referred to the Holy Spirit as "it," because at the end of that discussion, one man in the group asked me if I'd meet with him later in his dorm room. He was a graduate student in theology so I was honored at the invitation and I gladly accepted.

When I went to his room, I was amazed to find that the walls were lined entirely with books. I felt that I was in the presence of a true scholar. He handed me a Greek New Testament, and I have to say, I was dismayed. I admitted to him that I had been at the college only a couple of weeks and I scarcely knew more than a few words and phrases in Greek. That didn't deter him. He proceeded to go through the New Testament with me, one verse after another, teaching me that the Holy Spirit is not an "it" but a "He" - a person, a member of the holy Trinity. My entire perspective changed.

- Have you had an experience with the person of the Holy Spirit?

When you begin to see the Holy Spirit as a person - not as a power or an experience - you have a much different perspective on receiving or getting the Holy Spirit.

From where does our false understanding of the Holy Spirit as an "it" tend to arise? In many cases, from Acts 2 where we read about the coming of the Holy Spirit into the lives of the first Christians:

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as

of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1-4).

People tend to confuse the sights and sounds present at the Holy Spirit's arrival with the Holy Spirit Himself. They read of a rushing windlike sound from heaven. They read of a mass of fire that seems to divide into tongues that touch each person. They read of the people speaking in languages they didn't learn with their minds. And they assume that the sound, the fire, and the unknown tongues are the Holy Spirit.

These are manifestations of the Spirit's coming to the church on the day of Pentecost shortly after Jesus' ascension. They are *not* the Holy Spirit Himself. The sound is as a rushing mighty wind. The glowing light seems as divided tongues of fire. The Holy Spirit is infinitely more than any single manifestation of His presence.

### **The Characteristics of a Person**

What makes a person a person - as opposed to any of God's other creatures? The three foremost qualities of personhood are these:

- *Knowledge* - an ability to know, understand, recognize, and have meaning
- *Will* - an ability to make choices and decisions on the basis of what one chooses to do, not as an instinctual response to external stimuli
- *Emotion* - an ability to feel, both to have and express feelings and to be aware of them

Let's take a look at Scriptures that reveal these qualities associated with the Holy Spirit.

We read about the *knowing* ability of the Holy Spirit: "For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:11).

And we read about the *will* of the Holy Spirit: "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills" (1 Corinthians 12:11).

In Romans 15:30, we read about "the love of the Spirit," and in Ephesians 4:30, we read Paul's admonishment: "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God." We can't grieve Somebody who doesn't love us. Because the Holy Spirit has an emotional capacity, we can grieve Him. Yes, the Holy Spirit has *emotions*.

As you read through the verses below, note as part of your recording of insights that these are all the actions or functions of a person.

#### **What the Word Says**

And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever (John 14:16).

The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you (John 14:26).

When the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me (John 15:26).

And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment (John 16:8).

#### **What the Word Says to Me**

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Helping, comforting, teaching, calling to remembrance, testifying, convicting - these are all actions of a person.

- What new insights do you have into the nature of the Holy Spirit?

## The Holy Spirit Is Part of the Trinity

The Holy Spirit is the third member of the triune Godhead: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. He is inseparable from the Father and the Son; He is of one nature, character, and identity with them. At the same time, He is a unique person; He has a specific identity and function in our lives, just as Jesus has a specific identity and function and the Father has a specific identity and function. The Holy Spirit is present anytime the Father and the Son are present, and they in turn, are present anytime the Holy Spirit is present.

The Holy Spirit was present at creation: “The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (Genesis 1:2). And He was vital in the creation of humankind:

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them (Genesis 1:26-27).

Note the word *Our*. We have been created in the full image of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Now what does it mean to be created in God's image? To be created in God's image means that He has given us His qualities of personhood: we have an ability to know things and remember them, we have an ability to feel emotions and to respond to life with a full range of feelings, and we have an ability to make choices and decisions, to solve problems, to have “dominion” or authority over creation. We also have God's ability to help, to teach, to testify, to call to remembrance, to give convincing, convicting arguments. God has created us with the full capacity to be people.

As part of our creation, God “breathed” Himself into us. He imparted the capacity for His very nature to us. We have the specific ability to know God, to sense God at work in us, and to respond to God. He made us with the capacity to be His children and to invite Him into our lives.

You may ask, “Are you saying that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God?” That's exactly what I'm saying. We are wise to refer to Him in just that way:

- The Holy Spirit of God almighty
- The Holy Spirit of Christ Jesus - the same Spirit who indwelt Christ
- The Holy Spirit who indwells us today

All are one and the same Holy Spirit! His role in the Trinity is to fill, to energize, to empower, to cause to act, to compel behavior, to produce qualities of character, to work in and through God's creation.

He is not the Creator, but there was and is no creation without Him. He is not the Father, but there is no understanding of our need for relationship or confirmation of our relationship with the Father without Him. He is not God almighty, but there is no expression of or conviction about God's will apart from Him.

He is not the Son, but there are no awareness of sin and no coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as Savior apart from Him. He is not Jesus, but Jesus did not do anything apart from the Holy Spirit's empowerment.

The Holy Spirit is inseparable from Christ Jesus and from God the Father.

- What new insights do you have into the nature of the Holy Spirit?

## The Holy Spirit Is the Promise of

### God to the Believer

The Holy Spirit has a unique relationship with believers. Let the verses of Scripture below speak to you directly and personally. Keep in mind that Paul is writing in both cases to people who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior and who are following Him as the Lord of their lives.

#### What the Word Says

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory (Ephesians 1:13-14).

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you (Romans 8:9-11).

These verses say plainly that if you have Christ, you have the Holy Spirit of God. He is the seal of your commitment to Jesus Christ. In other words, when you accept Jesus Christ as the substitutionary, sacrificial, all-sufficient atonement for your sins - as an act of your confession and will - the Holy Spirit automatically seals that decision before the Father in heaven. You belong to God forever. There is no unsealing of what the Holy Spirit seals, not by your actions or by the actions of any other person.

Conversely, if you do not have the Holy Spirit resident in you, as God's seal and guarantee on your life - in other words, as God's claim that you belong to Him - you haven't received Jesus Christ as your Savior.

Can you be a Christian and not have the Holy Spirit? No.

Some people ask, "Have you received the Holy Spirit since you became a Christian?"

The question they ask is an impossibility. You received the Holy Spirit *as part of your receiving Christ*. You can't receive just one part of the Trinity. When you became a Christian - when you confessed your sins and repented of them, when you asked for and received God's forgiveness - you received the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God came and indwelt your spirit and claimed you as His own. He has put you into full relationship with the Father and the Son, because He is inseparable from the Father and the Son. He now seeks to live His life - the same quality of life that Jesus Christ lived - in you and through you.

- Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior?

### The Promise to Every Believer

Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to His disciples, and that promise extends to us as His disciples today. Recall that Jesus said, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things" (John 14:26). Jesus said the Father *will* send the Spirit.

At the time of Jesus' ascension, He said to His disciples, "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). It was the promise that Jesus had made to them on the night of the Last Supper - the promise of the Holy Spirit's coming to them to help and comfort them in His absence.

In Acts 1:8, we find these additional words at the time of Jesus' ascension: "You shall receive power *when* the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (emphasis added). There was no doubt in His mind that it would happen for those who desired to follow Him.

#### What the Word Says to Me

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Read Peter's description of the events on the day of Pentecost:

This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear (Acts 2:32-33).

Peter was saying, "We received the One who was promised. You witnessed the manifestation of His presence coming into our lives with your own eyes and ears."

The Holy Spirit is God's promise to you as His child today. If you are a believer and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, you have the Holy Spirit resident in you.

### **The Holy Spirit Is the Power of the Believer**

Why did Jesus promise the Holy Spirit to those who followed Him? Because He knew that they would need to have the Holy Spirit in them if they were to be faithful, steadfast, and effective in their walk with God. The Holy Spirit enables people to live the Christian life.

#### **What the Word Says**

The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him . . . that you may know . . . what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church (Ephesians 1:17-22).

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever (Ephesians 3:20).

Paul wanted the believers to know that they had full resurrection power in their lives. They had the same power that raised Christ Jesus from the dead. Certainly, such power was able to raise them from their sins. Not only that, but the power is above all other principality, power, dominion, or might. Nothing is more powerful than the Holy Spirit resident in you.

- How do you feel about the fact that if you are a believer in Christ Jesus, you have the power of the Holy Spirit in you?
- In what ways is the Lord challenging you in your spiritual walk with Him?

**Congratulations! You have finished a study on relying on the Holy Spirit.**

This material is a chapter from one of Dr. Stanley's [study guide series](#). The complete [105-page study guide](#) from Thomas Nelson Publishers may be purchased through In Touch Ministries. Also available is a six-tape audio album [Our Divine Helper - The Holy Spirit](#) to complement the content of the study guide.

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#### **What the Word Says to Me**

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