

Basic Christianity
From An Urban Perspective Unit 1
Week 6: The Holy Spirit

Review: So far we have studied what the Bible says about human nature, our core problem as humans and what God has done in Christ to reconcile us to himself. Tonight, we want to talk about living the Christian life. This is really exciting. **Christianity is a relationship with God. But how do we develop this relationship? How do we draw near to God? What kinds of things should we expect as God works in our lives?** These are some of the questions we'll get into.

The Holy Spirit

Jesus' death on the cross tore down the dividing wall between sinful people and God. When we receive the death of Christ personally, we are "justified." Justification means that God sees us as innocent and forgives us of our sins. Once we are justified, God begins a life-long work of restoring us to his original design.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, the image of God in them was distorted. They became alienated from God, themselves, each other and from the environment. The Christian life is a process of healing and transformation in which God “conforms us to the image of his son” (Romans 8:29).

How does God accomplish this work? Through the *Holy Spirit*, the third member of the trinity. Before we talk about what the Holy Spirit does, let's consider who he is.

Who is the Holy Spirit?

1. The Holy Spirit is a “he.” You may think of the Holy Spirit as power and energy, an impersonal force in the world. But the Bible is clear that he is a personal being.

John refers to the Spirit as a “he” not an “it.” (John 14:16, 17)

He has a *mind* and thoughts (1 Corinthians 2:10, 11).

He has *emotions* (Ephesians 4:30).

He can be *lied* to (Acts 5:3, 4).

He makes *decisions* (1 Corinthians 12:11).

2. The Holy Spirit is *God*.

He is equated with God (see Acts 5:3, 4; 2 Corinthians 3:17).

He does things that only God can do: He is involved in *creation* (Genesis 1:2; Psalm 104:30, Job 33:4). He knows *everything* (omniscient) (1 Corinthians 12:11, 12). He is ever *present* (omnipresent) (Psalm 139:7).

What does the Holy Spirit do?

It is important to note that the Holy Spirit's work in the world is *different* today than it was during the Old Testament.

Old Testament	Verse	New Testament	Verse
with	Judges 14:6	<i>in</i>	Ezekiel 36:26, 27
given to some of God's people	Acts 1:16 1 Peter 2:11	<i>given to all</i>	1 Corinthians 12:13
temporary	1 Samuel 11:6a, 1 Samuel 16:14a	<i>permanent</i>	Ephesians 1:13b,14

The work of the spirit in the Old Testament:

- The Holy Spirit was with people, but did not live in people. For example, He "came upon" (vs. indwelt) judges and empowered them to be dynamic leaders.
e.g. "At that moment the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon (Samson), and he ripped the lion's jaws apart with his bare hands." – Judges 14:6
- The Holy Spirit was given to some of God's people, but not all of them.
e.g. The Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets (Acts 1:16, 1 Peter 2:11).
- The Holy Spirit was temporarily with people, but not permanently.
e.g. "Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul mightily" – 1 Samuel 11:6a
e.g. "Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul..." – 1 Samuel 16:14a

The Old Testament prophets spoke of a day when God would change the way he relates with his people.

(Eze 36:26, 27) "And I will give you a new heart with new and right desires, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony heart of sin and give you a new, obedient heart. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you so you will obey my laws and do whatever I command."

He called this change the "New Covenant." The New Testament describes what our new relationship with the Spirit will be like under the New Covenant:

(1 Corinthians 12:13) Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into Christ's body by one Spirit, and we have all received the same Spirit.

- We "receive" the Spirit. He lives *in* us.
- *All* of God's people (Jews, Gentiles, slave, free) receive the Spirit.
- We are all *permanently* indwelt by the Spirit.

(Ephesians 1:13b, 14) And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. 14 The Spirit is God's *guarantee* that he will give us everything he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. This is just one more reason for us to praise our glorious God.

Why is there a *difference* between how the Holy Spirit works in the Old and New Testament? John 7:38, 39 provides an answer:

“If you believe in me, come and drink! For the Scriptures declare that rivers of living water will flow out from within. (When he said "living water," he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him. But the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory.)” – John 7:38, 39

Christ was glorified after he died on the cross for our sins and rose again to be with the Father. Before that happened, there was no payment for our sin. This is why the Holy Spirit did not indwell God’s people in the Old Testament. He was with them, but not in them. Now that Jesus has paid the penalty of our sin, our sin problem is dealt with and the Holy Spirit can now live inside us.

Ministries of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament:

Jesus said at the end of his ministry that it was to his disciples' advantage that he go, so that the "Helper" (Jesus’ nickname for the Holy Spirit) would be sent (John 16:7). What is the advantage of the Holy Spirit? **One of the best passages to understand what the Holy Spirit does is John 14 and 16.** I suggest you read this section of scripture. Here, we will summarize **some of the important ministries he does.**

1. Conviction. The Holy Spirit speaks through people's conscience.

“And when he comes, he will convince the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment. 9 The world's sin is unbelief in me. 10 Righteousness is available because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more. 11 Judgment will come because the prince of this world has already been judged.” – **John 16:8-11**

He exposes guilt and the need for forgiveness. This lays the ground work for evangelism. When we share Christ with our friends, we need to trust that God's Spirit is personally confirming the truth of what we say. It may not be apparent to us, and it may be a process of some time, but God is wrestling with fallen people's rebellious hearts.

E.g. People who come to teachings and say, "I thought he was talking about me."

2. Assurance. God wants us to know that we are fully acceptable to him. He doesn't want us to go around wondering if he accepts us today.

“For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God's children.” – Romans 8:16

“And because you Gentiles have become his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, and now you can call God your dear Father.” – Galatians 5:6

Assurance is necessary for a healthy Christian life. How can we be vulnerable to someone, and entrust ourselves to them if we are not fully confident in their unconditional acceptance of us?

3. Illumination. We can pray to the Spirit to help us understand and apply what God has revealed in his Word.

(1 Corinthians 2:11, 12) No one can know what anyone else is really thinking except that person alone, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. 12 And God has actually given us his Spirit (not the world's spirit) so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us.

When we read the scripture or hear a Bible teaching, we often experience an inner conviction that what we are hearing is true. This is the Spirit using his Word to speak into our lives. If you combine careful study of the Word with listening to the Spirit, God will teach you truths from his Word.

4. *Counsel.* Speaking of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said...

(John 16:7) But it is actually best for you that I go away, because if I don't, the Counselor won't come. If I do go away, he will come because I will send him to you.

God is actively involved in all of our circumstances. He enables us to make sense out of the seemingly fragmented experiences of life.

5. *Empowering.* **The Holy Spirit provides the ability to serve beyond our natural abilities.**
See Acts 6:8-10.

We often hear people say, "I can't really serve God." "I don't know how." "I don't know enough Bible." "I don't have the strength/courage." And it's true! No one is capable of serving God. But God, through his Spirit, is willing to empower you to serve others.

"It is not that we think we can do anything of lasting value by ourselves. Our only power and success come from God." – Corinthians 3:5

"For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him and the power to do what pleases him." – Philippians 2:13

We can impact people spiritually, because he gives us the wisdom and insight they need. We should pray that God would empower us to serve him.

Memory Verse: 1 Corinthians 2:12