

The Holy Spirit



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*.

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 are 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; 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*.

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*.

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*.

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*.

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?

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*.

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?

The Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** *John 14:16*

► **The Student Will:**

Know: Recognize that although Christ ascended to heaven, he or she is neither orphaned nor abandoned.

Feel: Find comfort in God's irrefutable promise to always be near whenever he or she needs Him.

Do: Lay aside those barriers that blockade the Holy Spirit's entrance into his or her life or the lives of others.

► **Learning Outline:**

I. Know: The Holy Spirit Assumes Spiritual Leadership.

A Why was it important that the Holy Spirit be essentially the same as Christ to qualify as His earthly replacement?

B In what ways is the Holy Spirit similar and dissimilar to Christ?

C Why would it be dangerous to subordinate the Members of the Godhead based upon Their roles?

II. Feel: The Comfort of God's Abiding Presence

A Why will believers appreciate the Holy Spirit if they appreciate Jesus?

B How can God's abiding presence through the Holy Spirit's work bring us peace in the midst of trying circumstances?

C How can the confidence we feel in God empower our witness for Him?

III. Do: The Holy Spirit Fills Receptive Hearts.

A How can believers nurture receptive attitudes that allow the Holy Spirit to fill us?

B How can believers encourage receptivity in others for the same purpose?

C How can the church remove barriers to the Spirit's outpouring?

► **Summary:** Jesus taught that His Divine Counterpart would assume earthly spiritual leadership during His absence. His followers would not be abandoned. Every need, every tear, every triumph still draws divine attention.

Learning Cycle

►STEP 1—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: *John 3:5–8; 14:16–18, 26; 15:26*

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: **Connecting with the Holy Spirit opens unlimited possibilities for Christian development and growth.**

Marriage, although greatly important, has never been humankind’s primary relationship. God reserves that association for Himself. Unfortunately, some believers enter lifetime commitments with God, knowing next to nothing. With great frequency these commitments are broken when disappointments arise, usually caused by human misunderstanding of the divine character and purposes. Jesus devoted significant portions of His teaching ministry to introducing the Holy Spirit. Foreseeing His nearing ascension, knowing His disciples’ need for personal companionship, and recognizing the Spirit’s increasing earthly responsibilities following His departure, Christ taught extensively regarding His (the Spirit’s) mission. Through dedicated investigations of Christ’s teachings herein, believers may avoid the aforementioned disappointments that cause spiritual separation and, instead, experience the richness of continuous relationships with God.

Opening Discussion: One of Christ’s memorable metaphors represents God’s Spirit as the wind. Operate an oscillating fan, if available, thus artificially simulating wind. Discuss the wind’s characteristics; for example, invisibility, forcefulness, movement, sound production, potential destructiveness, prospective energy production, and so on. Associated concepts might include hyperventilation, getting winded, shortness of breath, windmills, wind instruments, and wind tunnels. Carefully consider spiritual applications drawn from these metaphors that offer instructions for believers’ sustenance, development, and advancement.

Substitute Opening Discussion: One of Christ’s memorable metaphors represents God’s Spirit as the wind. Blow on a blade of grass, a leaf, or a similar object to illustrate. Discuss the wind’s characteristics; for example, invisibility, forcefulness, movement, sound production, potential destructiveness, prospective energy production, and so on. Associated concepts might include hyperventilation, getting winded, shortness of breath, windmills, wind instruments, and wind tunnels. Carefully consider spiritual applications drawn from these metaphors that offer instructions for believers’ sustenance, development, and advancement.

►STEP 2—Explore

Bible Commentary

I. Superlative Representative (Review John 14:16–26, 15:26, 16:7–14 with your class.)

Athletic enterprises have developed the terminology of first and second string. The concept means classifying groups according to their capabilities. *First-stringers* constitute the most accomplished and experienced grouping. Whenever injuries happen, *second-string* players advance to *first-string* as replacements. The unspoken expectation is that group performance will deteriorate because the ability level has declined. Basketball, particularly, strategizes to minimize this deteriorating phenomenon. Because substitutions (replacements) are commonplace, the importance of maintaining optimal performance with second-stringers is paramount. Basketball developed the concept of the *sixth man*. Although not among the starting five, this player would be so accomplished that group performance would not decline when he entered into the lineup. Having the sixth man aboard would essentially equal the performance of the starting players. This additional player might possess different skills, would have his distinct personality, and not be identical with other players. Nevertheless, the team's performance would remain optimum, eventually leading to triumph.

These operational concerns have spiritual precedents. How does Heaven replace the quintessential expression of divine love, Jesus Christ, at His earthly departure? Who possessed those requisite characteristics necessary for accomplishing the assigned mission? Whose reputation would justify transferring allegiances to an additional leader? Could someone other than God—perhaps a preeminent angelic creature—satisfy those requirements?

Obviously, the “selection committee” had limited options. First, the qualified candidate would essentially stand equal with the departing Messiah. That Messiah was preexistent (*Col. 1:15–17, Heb. 1:8–12, John 1:1–14*), inherently possessing everlasting life. Christ was undeniably God, and, therefore, Jesus' replacement must likewise be authentically deity. Second, the qualified candidate would be universally available. Christ's kingdom was rapidly expanding. Shortly, believers would populate every corner of planet Earth. Requests for divine assistance warrant immediate attention. Who could provide this immediacy for the worldwide population? Additional considerations might be listed, but already the candidate list has been narrowed down to God's Spirit. Christ's replacement is like Christ Himself—essentially God, albeit a distinctive personality—and is omnipresent, therefore capable of processing simultaneous requests globally. Jesus carefully introduces Him to His associates near the end of His earthly sojourn. Here is the quintessential Representative of the quintes-

sentient revelation of divine love! He will reveal total truth.

Consider This: Why should Christians exercise great care when discoursing about the nature of the Holy Spirit?

II. Caution: Spirit Working (*Review John 3:5–8, 15:26, 16:8–13, and Acts 1:4–8 with your class.*)

Although our current investigation focuses on Christ's teachings regarding the Holy Spirit, no exploration would be complete without understanding the presentation of the Holy Spirit from the Old Testament forward. Genesis 1:1–3 indicates that God's Spirit participated in Creation. He equipped people for specific undertakings: (1) Bible writing (*1 Pet. 1:10, 11*), (2) tabernacle construction (*Exod. 31:3*), (3) leadership (Othniel, Jephthah, David—*see Judg. 3:10, 11:29, 1 Sam. 16:13*), and (4) prophetic utterance (*Luke 1:15, 41, 67; 1 Sam. 10:9–13*). Furthermore, the Holy Spirit oversaw and empowered Christ's earthly ministry: (a) Jesus was conceived by the Spirit (*Luke 1:35, Matt. 1:20*). (b) Jesus was likewise anointed with the Holy Spirit (*Isa. 11:1, 2; 42:1; Luke 3:22; 4:18; Acts 10:38*). (c) The Holy Spirit guided Jesus' earthly movements (*Luke 4:1, 2*), and (d) even facilitated Christ's sacrificial offering (*Heb. 9:14*). (e) Finally, Jesus was resurrected by God's Spirit (*Rom. 8:11*).

Christ's teachings and prophetic utterances, however, pointed toward a post-Pentecostal presence of God's Spirit, whereby additional aspects of His divine working might be revealed. During Christ's absence, God's Spirit functions as the Divine Spokesperson (*John 16:13*). He also carries prosecutorial responsibilities for convicting the world regarding their unbelief (*vss. 8, 9*). He advocates in the sense of a defending attorney for Christ and Jesus' adherents (*John 14:15–17, 15:25–27*). He substantiates Christ's righteousness, demonstrated by Jesus' resurrection and ascension, and announces judgment against the world for its rejection thereto (*John 16:8–11*). The Spirit delivers humanity from sin's power (*Rom. 8:2*) and inscribes divine precepts upon believers' hearts (*1 Cor. 3:16, 2 Cor. 3:3*). God's Spirit effects spiritual regeneration, that process whereby the acceptance of Christ's substitutionary atonement internally transforms lives and produces new lifestyles (*John 3:3–7*). The Spirit invests believers with supernatural power (*Acts 1:5–8*) and dwells within them, imparting spiritual strength and authority (*Rom. 8:9–11; 1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 6:19*). Finally, the Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts to believers for accomplishing Christ's mission (*1 Corinthians 12*).

Consider This: Why should purported manifestations of God's Spirit be measured by the scriptural standard rather than being blindly accepted?

► **STEP 3—Apply**

Just for Teachers: The succinct sketch and incomplete outline of the

Spirit's work presented above still illustrate the vastness of the Spirit's industry. Salvation is by invitation only. God will not coerce. Why is each individual responsible for his or her choice?

Thought/Application Questions:

- ① How can humans be certain that their lives are completely surrendered to the Holy Spirit's leadership?
- ② How can believers ascertain which spiritual gifts have been bestowed upon them?
- ③ How can Christians assist nonbelievers in surrendering their lives to the Holy Spirit's leading?
- ④ Which specific practices have you undertaken to maintain a living connection with God's Spirit?
- ⑤ How would you describe the release you first experienced when the Spirit liberated you from Satan's clutches?
- ⑥ How can Christians safeguard appropriate emotional and experiential responses to the Holy Spirit's work against attacks from those who regard all such manifestations as emotionalism?
- ⑦ What can your church do to properly educate believers regarding the important, but frequently neglected, work of God's Spirit?
- ⑧ How can your church incorporate stronger emphases on the Spirit's manifestation into the weekly worship service?

►STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: Luke tells us that following the reception of the Holy Spirit's power, God's people would be empowered for witness. This forms the backdrop for the recommended activity. Once the Spirit has been received, what should believers do?

Activity: American industriousness transformed a dormant continent into the most productive economy in history. The resources were underutilized for generations, although they were always present. The Spirit has been forever present, although His potential has seldom been completely harnessed. Study your community and, praying for the Spirit's guidance, formulate a ministry that will address some unmet need. Keep it simple; leave complexity for multinational corporations, which you are not. Make it achievable through the Spirit's power, but guard against underachieving because your plans rely solely upon currently visible resources. Allow the Spirit to do for you that which you cannot do for yourselves.