

The Holy Spirit



SABBATH—JULY 12

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: John 14:16–18; John 14:26; John 15:26; Matthew 12:31, 32; John 16:8; John 3:5–8; Luke 11:9–13.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘I will ask the Father. And he will give you another Friend to help you and to be with you forever’ ” (John 14:16, NlrV).

PEOPLE DO NOT UNDERSTAND AS MUCH ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT AS THEY DO THE FATHER AND THE SON. This is a bit strange because the Holy Spirit is closest to us. He is the One who makes the new birth happen in us. He also lives in us and changes us. But He is the One we know so little about.

Why? To begin with, the Bible is not as clear about the Holy Spirit as it is about the Father and the Son. There are many verses about the Spirit in the Bible. But most of those verses describe Him in symbols or word-pictures. The Bible gives us enough information about the work of the Spirit. But it does not say much about His nature (who He is).

Another reason comes from the work of the Holy Spirit. He is always trying to direct our attention to Christ, not to Himself. In the plan of salvation, the Spirit serves the Father and the Son. But His work does not mean that He is not equal to the Father or the Son.

This week we listen to what Jesus taught about the Spirit. Let us eagerly pray for the Holy Spirit's work in changing our lives.

THE REPRESENTATIVE¹ OF CHRIST (John 14:16–18)

With fear and sadness, the disciples listened as Jesus announced His coming death. When they were without Christ's presence, who would be their Teacher, Friend, and Advisor? Jesus knew of their great need. So He promised to send His Representative to be with them.

What special name did Christ use for His Representative? Read John 14:16–18. In what way was that name the right choice? Read also John 14:26.

Helper, Counselor (Advisor), and Comforter are different translations of the Greek *paraklētos*. This word is made up of the preposition *para*, “beside,” and the adjective *klētos*, “called.” It means “one called to the side of.” This gives the idea of “a person called to one’s aid.” It may mean a mediator,² an intercessor,³ a helper, an advisor, or even a legal advocate.⁴

Only John uses the term *paraklētos* in the New Testament. He also used this word to describe Jesus Himself (1 John 2:1).

During His earthly ministry (work done for God), Christ was the disciples’ Counselor, Helper, and Comforter. So, it makes sense for His successor (the Holy Spirit) to receive the same name. The Holy Spirit is sent by the Father when the Son asks Him to do so and in His name too (John 14:16, 26). The Spirit continues Christ’s work on this earth.

Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus worked with the disciples in spirit. “‘I will not leave you like children who don’t [do not] have parents. I will come to you’ ” (John 14:18, NIV). Jesus was not talking about paying them a visit sometimes. This would not be of much comfort to helpless “orphans.” Rather, Jesus was announcing a permanent and close relationship: “‘I in you’ ” (verse 20, NKJV). This was going to be possible only through the Holy Spirit working with the disciples.

Of course, Christ’s human nature prevented Him from being in every place in person at the same time. But the Holy Spirit is everywhere (Psalm 139:7). By the Spirit, our Savior is available to all. It does not matter where His followers are or how far Jesus is from them.

In what ways have you experienced the closeness of the Holy Spirit, even though we do not easily understand His nature?

DEFINITIONS

1. representative—a person who is chosen to act or speak on behalf of another. The Holy Spirit acts and speaks on behalf of Jesus.
2. mediator—a person who works to make peace or to reach an agreement between two opposing sides.
3. intercessor—a person who helps to settle an argument or disagreement between two or more people.
4. advocate—a person who argues for the cause of another person in a court of law.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A PERSON (John 14:26)



The nature of the Holy Spirit is a mystery that cannot be explained.



We must invite the Holy Spirit to live in our hearts.

DEFINITIONS

5. Evangelism—the act of spreading the good news about Jesus to the world.

6. characters—all that people do, say, or feel make up their characters.

Ellen G. White wrote that “the nature of the Holy Spirit is a mystery. Men cannot explain it. This is because the Lord has not shown it to them. . . . Because these mysteries are too deep for us to understand, it is better that nothing more be said about them.”—Adapted from *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 52.

But she also supported the idea that “the Holy Spirit is a Person. This is because He gives witness to our spirits that we are the children of God. . . . He must also be a God-person. If not, He could not search out the secrets which lie hidden in the mind of God.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*,⁵ pages 616, 617.

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

Jesus spoke of several actions the Spirit carries out. All of them show that the Spirit is a Person. Who better than a person to teach us and to help us to remember all the things that Christ said (John 14:26)? Or who better than a person to speak of Jesus (John 15:26), help the world to accept Jesus (John 16:8), guide us into all truth, and also hear and speak (verse 13)? And only Christ can give men true wisdom (verse 14).

The New Testament writers followed the teachings of Jesus. They made it clear that the Holy Spirit has all the qualities (important things) that a person has: will (1 Corinthians 12:11), mental ability (Acts 15:28; Romans 8:27), and emotions (strong feelings; Romans 15:30; Ephesians 4:30).

The Holy Spirit is God. For this reason, we must humbly surrender ourselves to His will and leading. We will invite Him to live in our hearts (Romans 8:9), to change our lives (Titus 3:5), and to bear (make) the fruit of the Spirit in our characters⁶ (Galatians 5:22, 23). On our own, we are helpless. It is only as His power works in us that we can have what Jesus has promised to us.

How can you make sure, day by day, that you are not turning away from what the Holy Spirit is trying to do in your life?

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD (Matthew 12:31, 32)

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*. This word means “another of the same kind.” It is not *heteros*, which means “another of different kind or quality.” The same nature that connects the Father and the Son is shown 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 God can announce the future (Isaiah 46:9, 10).

The Holy Spirit is God. This fact is supported by His work in inspiring Bible writers. Jesus made it clear that this was work the Spirit was given to do. Jesus argued that “ ‘David himself said by the Holy Spirit’ ” (Mark 12:36, NKJV).

While on this earth, Jesus was always under the leading of the Holy Spirit. After being anointed (filled) by the Spirit at His baptism (Matthew 3:16, 17), Jesus was “led by the Spirit into the wilderness” (Luke 4:1, NKJV). He won a great victory over Satan. Then He “returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee” to carry on His ministry (verse 14, NKJV). The miracles Jesus did were done through the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:28). The fact that the Son of God depended on the Spirit is another example of the character of the Spirit as God.

Further proof of the Spirit as God lies in (is based on) His connection with the Father and the Son. Many verses show the Three Persons as equal. So, Jesus commanded the apostles (teachers and leaders) to baptize the new disciples “ ‘in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’ ” (Matthew 28:19, NKJV).

How does Matthew 12:31, 32 help us to understand that the Holy Spirit is God?

This is a comparison between speaking against the Son of Man, which may be forgiven, and speaking against the Holy Spirit, which cannot be forgiven. This shows that the Spirit is not just a common person. Blasphemy⁷ is a sin that is done directly against God. So, the Holy Spirit is One of the Three Persons of the Godhead. Much has been written about the “unforgivable sin.” But the true meaning shows people so hardened against the Spirit and His saving work that they credit His work to the devil!

DEFINITIONS

7. blasphemy—great disrespect shown to God.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (John 16:8)

We have already spoken of the important role (work) of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christ as a human on earth and in the Bible. Let us study now what Jesus taught about the Spirit's work for our salvation.

What important work does the Holy Spirit do in preparing us to accept the Savior? Read John 16:8.



Who takes medicine without first admitting to being sick?

Who takes medicine without first admitting that he or she is sick? By the same token, we cannot be saved if we do not accept the fact that we are sinners. Softly but slowly the Holy Spirit leads us to accept that we have sinned, are guilty, and are under the holy judgment of God.

Then the Spirit leads us to Christ and gives witness to Him (John 15:26). He points to Jesus as the only One who can save us. 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. So, the Holy Spirit is called “the Spirit of truth” (John 14:17).

First, we must accept that we have sinned. (This suggests repentance [turning away] from our sins.) Then we are directed to Jesus and His truth. And we are now ready for the Holy Spirit to do His greatest work.

Why is it so important for us to be “born of the Spirit”? Read John 3:5–8.

There are those who have tried on their own to change their lives for the better. They know how useless their efforts are. It is impossible for us, without God's help, to change our sinful lives.

The work of the Holy Spirit is necessary beyond the beginning of our Christian lives. We also need Him all the time. To encourage our spiritual growth, the Spirit teaches us and reminds us of all the things that Jesus taught (John 14:26). If we let Him, He stays with us forever as our Helper, Comforter, and Advisor (verse 16).

Bad character habits are hard to change. And even when we stop doing them, we can be overcome by them again. What should our weaknesses and our desires to give in to sin tell us about our need to surrender fully to the Holy Spirit?

FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT (Luke 11:9–13)

No doubt it is important to know who the Holy Spirit is. But this knowledge would be useless if we do not fully open our lives to be filled with Him. Jesus made it clear that if we fail to invite the Holy Spirit into our daily lives, we invite another kind of spirit who is eager to enter into our empty lives and cause serious spiritual problems (Matthew 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*, page 139.

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

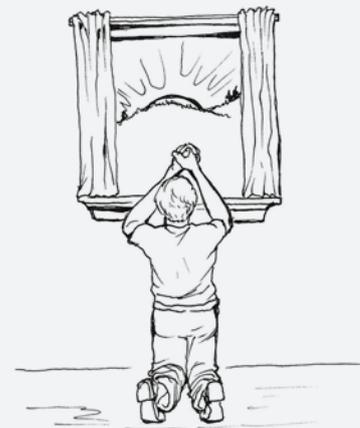
At the Last Supper, Jesus promised His disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit. He pointed to the Spirit’s comforting and teaching work. This work was to meet the disciples’ need at that time. But after Christ rose back to life, the situation was different, and the disciples faced new challenges.

What was the main point of Jesus’ promise of the Holy Spirit after His return to life? Read Acts 1:4–8.

Acts 1:5 holds the only record of Jesus talking about being “ ‘baptized with the Holy Spirit’ ” (NKJV). John the Baptist had announced this special baptism (Matthew 3:11; John 1:33). But it had to wait until Christ went to heaven. What does baptism with the Spirit mean?

In Acts 1:8, Jesus Himself explained what this meant. He said that you are “ ‘baptized with the Holy Spirit’ ” (verse 5, NKJV) “ ‘when the Holy Spirit has come upon you’ ” (verse 8, NKJV). To be baptized is to be fully “buried” in water. It includes the whole person. Baptism with the Holy Spirit means to be fully under the influence of the Spirit. It also means to be completely “filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18, NKJV). This is not a “once and forever” experience. It is something that needs to be done all the time.

If someone asked you if you had ever been “filled with the Spirit,” how would you answer, and why?



We must ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit each day.

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Ellen G. White, “The Power Promised,” pages 19–23, in *Testimonies*⁸ for the Church, volume 8; “The Gift of the Spirit,” pages 47–56, in *The Acts of the Apostles*.

“At all times and in all places, in all sorrows and in all suffering, when the future seems dark and puzzling, we may feel helpless and alone. But the Comforter [Holy Spirit] will be sent in answer to the prayer of faith. Results of our actions may separate us from every earthly friend. But no event nor distance can separate us from the heavenly Comforter. Wherever we are or go, the Spirit is always at our right hand to support, uplift, encourage, and cheer.”
—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pages 669, 670.

“The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that Jesus could receive from His Father for supporting His people. The Spirit was to be given to renew and strengthen God’s people. Without the Spirit, the sacrifice of Christ would have been for nothing. The power of evil had been gaining strength for many hundreds of years. And the surrender of men to Satan’s control was very surprising. Sin could be turned away from only through the full power of the Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the Godhead. It is the Spirit that makes good what Jesus has done as our Savior.”
—Adapted from *The Desire of Ages*, page 671.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Humans like to shine in self-glory. But what lessons does the humble work of the Holy Spirit teach us?
- ② In His talk with Nicodemus, Jesus compared⁹ the Spirit to the wind. What spiritual lessons may we learn from that comparison?
- ③ Some people claim that speaking in “tongues” is proof of being “filled with the Spirit.” How should we answer this claim?
- ④ We like to think of the work of the Holy Spirit on one soul. This is, of course, correct. But at the same time, how can we know that the work of the Spirit is real in our church as a group?

DEFINITIONS

8. *Testimonies*—the writings of Ellen G. White.

9. compared—to show how two or more things are the same or different.