

The Holy Spirit (Pneumatology)

Session Outline

1. Intro
2. The Personhood of the Holy Spirit
3. The Deity of the Holy Spirit
4. The Work of the Holy Spirit
 - a. The Holy Spirit in Creation
 - b. The Holy Spirit in Redemption
 - c. The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures
 - d. The Holy Spirit in the Believer
 - i. Relating to the Holy Spirit

Say So far, we've seen God as revealed in His Word, in His divine Fatherhood, and in His lordship and salvation in the Son, Jesus. In this session, we meet the third Person of the Triune God, The Holy Spirit. In introducing Him, we will explore His nature and character, as well as how to relate with Him in ways that are meaningful to your daily living.

The Personhood of the Holy Spirit

Say God doesn't want us to be confused about His Holy Spirit and He wants us to relate with Him properly (which we'll explore at the last part of our time together). The third person of the Godhead is not third in rank or priority. He is not a "lesser God" or even a different God. In understanding the personhood of the Holy Spirit, we will see that He is a "He," not an "it." He is God, with personality and personhood, not an impersonal force. Let's read together about the personhood of the Holy Spirit¹:

Exploring the Personhood of the Holy Spirit

Jesus announced the Holy Spirit's impending arrival (after His own ascension back to the Father), as the coming of "another helper" (John 14:16). The Greek words for these two terms (*allos* and *paracletes*, respectively) are important in understanding the personhood of the Holy Spirit:

- *Allos* means "another of the same kind," in contrast to *heteros*, which means "another of a different kind." In this, Jesus is communicating that the Holy Spirit is the same in substance, equal in every way.
- *Paraclete* means "helper." Other translations render the word "advocate, counselor, comforter." In this, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would be another helper in the way that He is a helper. Just as Jesus has personhood, so, too, does the Holy Spirit.

Additionally, the Holy Spirit acts with rationale, rather than impersonally (see 1 Cor. 12:11). He teaches, guides, reveals, and convicts (John 14:26; 16:13; 14: 8, respectively). People relate with Him personally, rather than impersonally, able to resist Him (Acts 7:51), grieve Him (Eph. 4:30), lie to Him (Acts 5:3-4), quench Him (1 Thess. 5:19), and other behaviors that are only possible if the Spirit is a personal Being.

¹ Content adapted from <https://bible.org/seriespage/4-pneumatology-holy-spirit>
Know What You Believe about the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology)
(All Scriptures ESV unless otherwise noted)

Ask Why do you think the Holy Spirit can be perceived as a force or an impersonal deity? *(answers may include that the Holy Spirit is unseen; that He is described as a wind, power, fire, breath and other descriptive terms that might cause a person to see the Holy Spirit as something that emanates from God, rather than God Himself.)*

Why do you think it is important to understand the personhood of the Holy Spirit? *Understanding the Holy Spirit's personhood makes it possible to relate with God in an ongoing way, to respond to Him, to obey Him, and to follow Him. As an impersonal force, there is no interactivity possible; and thus, no relationship.*

The Deity of the Holy Spirit

Say Despite the promise of Jesus to send "another helper" who is like Him, the Holy Spirit remains misunderstood by many people. On one extreme, He can be as the well-known pastor and author Francis Chan describes, the "forgotten God." On the other extreme, undue and even unbiblical emphasis can be attributed to Him, resulting in inappropriate behaviors and conduct that are likewise mistakenly attributed to Him. The goal is to understand Him as He is biblically revealed.

After promising the impending arrival of the Holy Spirit, and at the time of His ascension, Jesus affirmed the equality and unity of the Holy Spirit, commanding:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt. 28:18-20)

Ask Why do you think it is important to understand that the Holy Spirit is equal to the Father and the Son? *(So that the Holy Spirit is worshiped as God, that the Holy Spirit is obeyed and followed.)*

The Work of the Holy Spirit

Say The Holy Spirit has been active throughout history. The more we recognize His work, the more we appreciate Him as God:

The Holy Spirit in Creation

In our earlier (session 2) conversation about God, we discussed how God is the Creator. As we look closer in the Scriptures, we see that it is God's Holy Spirit that is the agent of creation. *(read)*

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. (Genesis 1:1-2)

The Hebrew word for "Spirit" is *ruwach*, and communicates God's animated vigor and power, not merely an inanimate breath, wind, or force. When we read that "God said, 'Let ...'" (Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26), it is incorrect to understand it as God's creative force issuing out from His speech; rather, it is God's Spirit Himself that is creating in perfect unity, coordination, and cooperation with the Godhead as the expression of His determination to create. When God says "Let us make man in our own image, (Genesis 1:26)" He is evidencing that His Spirit created humanity to uniquely possess the mental and spiritual capacity to relate with Him through His Spirit.

Ask What stands out to you as significant about the Holy Spirit's work of creation? *(discuss)*

The Holy Spirit in Redemption

Say Just as the Holy Spirit is the vital agent in the original creation, He is also vital in the new creation: *(read)*

The Role of the Holy Spirit in Redemption

- Jesus instructed the Jewish teacher Nicodemus, saying “Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). Jesus taught that spiritual rebirth was necessary to enter the Kingdom of God, and this was only possible by the regenerative work of the Spirit.
- In announcing the arrival of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, “And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment” (John 16:8).
- The Apostle Paul understood that salvation is the work of the Spirit, apart from our own efforts, writing, “he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5)

Just as the Godhead is completely unified and present in the work of creation, He is completely unified and present in the work of redemption. Just as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit are collaboratively and cooperatively active in creation, they are likewise collaboratively and cooperatively active in redemption!

Ask How have you experienced the work of the Holy Spirit in your own redemption/salvation? *(discuss)*

The Holy Spirit's Role in the Scriptures

Say Again, earlier in Essentials, we addressed the inerrancy of the Scriptures. Here, we are able to further appreciate the reliability of the Scriptures because we see within the pages of the Bible that the Holy Scriptures are authored by God's Holy Spirit:

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

This same personal, power-filled activity of God's Holy Spirit seen in creation and redemption is also seen in the perfect inspiration of His Holy Word, breathed by the Holy Spirit upon the men anointed and appointed to be the Scripture's penmen:

For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:21)

These inspired writers recorded God's Word without error, and the effect of the Spirit-authored Word upon its readers is timelessly dramatic in its ever-timely impact:

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

Ask What are some of the ways the Holy Spirit has spoken to you through your reading of the Bible? *(discuss)*

The Holy Spirit in the Believer

Say In a most profound manner, the Holy Spirit demonstrates His personal interest and sovereignty as the promised “another helper” in the lives of those who follow Jesus as Savior and Lord: *(read)*

The Activity of the Holy Spirit in the Christ-Follower

- Presence – The Holy Spirit automatically indwells the being of the Christ-follower at the moment of salvation, never leaving or forsaking the Believer even for a moment. (John 14:16-17; 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19-20)
- Security – At salvation, the Holy Spirit automatically seals the Christ-follower, providing impenetrable spiritual protection until the Believer arrives safely in heaven. (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30)
- Guarantee – The Holy Spirit’s sealing presence is God’s unwavering promise to complete everything that He has started in the Believer’s life, eventually fulfilling every eternal expectation pledged by God in His Holy Word (Ephesians 1:14; Philippians 1:6)
- Guidance – The Holy Spirit leads Believers through life, bestowing wisdom (Is. 11:2; Eph. 1:17), giving discernment (1 John 4:1; 1 Cor. 2:14), convicting of sin (Rom. 2:15; John 16:33), correcting errant thoughts (Ps. 94:12), offering encouragement (2 Tim. 1:7), and delivering from temptation (1 Cor. 10:13), among many more of His shepherding activities.
- Gifting – The Holy Spirit generously and graciously gifts Christ-followers with supernatural abilities for the purpose of serving others, advancing the Kingdom of God, extending the Gospel, meeting needs, and bringing glory to the name of Jesus. (Galatians 5:22-23)
- Productivity – Not only does God’s Holy Spirit give these spiritual gifts, but He works in and through Believers, bringing about supernatural results that accomplish God’s purposes. In this, this is God’s unhindered work accomplished through Spirit-filled Christ-followers. (John 15:5; Col. 1:9-11)

Ask What stands out to you from this list as personally impacting? Why? *(discuss)*

What is a responsibility of the Holy Spirit that you see on this list that you’d like to understand better?

Relating to the Holy Spirit

Say God’s Holy Spirit is active, personal, and interactive. He is acutely, ceaselessly interested in you. If your faith is in Jesus, He dwells within you, and is perpetually ministering to you. Accordingly, you can (and should) develop your ongoing relationship with Him in the following ways: *(have volunteers read the summary statement, with volunteers reading the supporting Scripture. The leader can read commentary to the group.)*

- Seek the Spirit’s leading – God’s Holy Spirit is relentlessly working in this world. He is not hiding. He does not play games with those who earnestly seek Him. As you see Him (in others, in a church community, in activities), join in on what He’s doing. (Jeremiah 29:13; Matthew 6:33; Hebrews 11:6)
- Listen for the Spirit – The power-filled breath of God’s Spirit fuels God’s Word, imbues godly preaching, inspires wise counsel. As you hear the Spirit (confirmed by and in agreement with the Scriptures), be ready to respond by faith. (Matthew 11:15; Rom. 10:17; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22)
- Receive whatever the Spirit offers you – The Holy Spirit is good and generous. He gives you Himself and His gifts, so you can experience the fullness of life promised to you by Jesus as an adopted child of the Father.

Know What You Believe about the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology)

(All Scriptures ESV unless otherwise noted)

He is the promised Helper, and He intercedes for you before the Father. Receive what He offers you to experience the life He has planned for you. (John 6:33; Romans 8:26-27; 1 John 4:14)

- Be filled with the Spirit – While you are filled to overflowing by the Spirit at the time of your salvation (Colossians 2:10), you have an ongoing experience where your feelings may not match up with the spiritual reality. In those seasons, let your faith trump your feelings, and avail yourself to experience the filling of God’s Spirit. Keep “short accounts” with God, confessing sin regularly to remain in agreement with Him about your dependence upon Him and to enjoy close fellowship with His Spirit. (Ephesians 3:19; Philippians 1:11)
- Be renewed by the Spirit – Living in a world where spiritual warfare is real, it is encouraging to know that God’s Holy Spirit continually renews you. You aren’t designed to struggle through life “sputtering on spiritual fumes,” but to thrive by the renewing presence of the Holy Spirit. (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)
- Be changed by the Spirit – God loves you just as you are but loves you far too much to let you remain just as you are. His Holy Spirit is His change agent in your life. Who the Holy Spirit is leading you to be is better than who you are right now, so as He renews your mind and changes your thinking, let His transformation of you and in you have its full effect. (Romans 12:1-2)
- Obey the Holy Spirit promptly – As God’s Holy Spirit speaks authoritatively through His Word and through others (in agreement with His Word), obey Him, promptly! Delayed or deferred obedience is disobedience. Determine to enjoy the blessing of swift agreement with God as He speaks to you! (Luke 11:28; John 8:31-32; Ephesians 6:17)
- Express His Spirit – As His Spirit fills you and gifts you, serve Him and the world by His indwelling power and strength. (Ephesians 3:36)
- Live in the Spirit continually – Determine to walk through life in vital, ongoing relationship with God’s Holy Spirit. (Galatians 5:16)

Ask What in this list is encouraging or challenging to you? (*discuss*)

What is something the Holy Spirit is leading you to do in response to this list, or this entire conversation about the Holy Spirit? (*discuss*)

Close in prayer with and for one another, making sure to attend to the needs of your group, planning for serving together, or other details relevant to the group. Confirm your next time and location to meet.