

a study of the *Holy Spirit*

Lesson 2: The Personality of the Holy Spirit

☞ What comes to your thoughts when you hear the phrase “the Holy Spirit”? Most will say that the image they associate with the Holy Spirit is mysterious and vague—even “ghost-like.” This is because most do not picture the Holy Spirit as a Divine Person but as some divine force or energy. When the Holy Spirit is considered as a Person, one’s understanding of the working of the Holy Spirit will be dramatically altered.

There is no question that the Holy Spirit is one of the most confused topics in all of religious study. Most have given up ever understanding the Holy Spirit. Perhaps most of this confusion arises because the “personality” of the Holy Spirit is not understood. The Holy Spirit is seldom viewed as a PERSON!

1. ☞ There are **TWO BROAD VIEWS** about the Holy Spirit.

- a. He is an impersonal, abstract force or power or influence that emanates from God the Father. Viewed in this manner the Holy Spirit is a neuter “IT” without any personal qualities. Unfortunately some texts use the neuter pronoun “IT” when speaking of the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:11). Usage of the neuter pronoun causes some confusion, but it can be easily explained by looking at the original Greek. The neuter pronoun is used because a neuter noun was used. Additionally, when other biblical evidence is considered, it is impossible to hold fast to this view.
- b. ☞ He is a Divine Person with life, thought, volition, action, individuality, character, and influence.

H. Leo Boles, in *The Holy Spirit: His Personality, Nature, And Work*, addresses this point...

The Holy Spirit is not a glorified “it.” It is a grievous blunder growing out of dense ignorance to pray to God to send “it,” or to ask that when “it” comes “it” will bring blessings to God’s people. Neither is the Holy Spirit merely “an influence.” He is not an impersonal and vague force released, in response to human need, to direct or influence the mind, disposition, or action of persons, whether sinners or saints. The Holy Spirit is far more than the mind, temper, or disposition of God or Christ; the Holy Spirit is not the Bible, New Testament, or Word of God. He is more than the vital element in Christ and his truth. The Holy Spirit vitalizes truth and makes it “sharper than any two-edged sword” (27-28).

The fact that the Holy Spirit is a personality and not an impersonal force is often the point that is missed when confusion regarding the Holy Spirit is found. Such a misunderstanding prompts questions as: “Have you received IT yet?” “What did IT feel

like?" This views the Holy Spirit, as some sort of mystical, magical force that comes from God and is sent to those deserving the special favor of the Almighty or to those who will do mysterious things for God.

2. 🕊️ The Holy Spirit is a **PERSONAL** God! He must be thought of in the same way as we think of God the Father and God the Son. We do not view the Father or Son as some mysterious force but as real Persons.

The following points help us understand that the Holy Spirit is a Person and not some abstract "force":

- a. 🕊️ The use of personal **PRONOUNS** indicates that He is a Person.

1) The New Testament texts use the masculine pronouns to describe the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 16:7-14).

2) These terms are used only in reference to individuals and not things!

- b. 🕊️ His **WORKS** indicates that He is a Person. The Scripture is specific in telling what the Holy Spirit does. Note that these actions are all indicative of what a Person can do. An inanimate "force" is unable to do these.

1) 🕊️ **Speaks** (1 Timothy 4:1; John 16:13; Matthew 10:20; Acts 4:25-26; 8:29; 10:19). The Holy Spirit speaks intelligently to intelligent people.



2) 🕊️ **Testifies** (John 15:26-27). A mere influence is not a credible witness to testify.

3) 🕊️ **Teaches** (John 14:26; 1 Corinthians 2:10). Only an intelligent Being is able to do this. The Holy Spirit is able to search the infinite mind of God and then communicate that Mind to mortals.







4) 🕊️ **Guides** (John 16:12-13; Acts 8:29; 16:6-7). The Holy Spirit revealed the directions to the Apostles. He chose the course for them to follow to teach others.


5) 🕊️ **Searches** (1 Corinthians 2:10). The Holy Spirit, as an impersonal force, would never be able to do this. Yet the Holy Spirit as a Person in the Godhead, would certainly know these things of God.


6) 🕊️ **Comforts** (John 14:16-17). The Holy Spirit was "another." This term literally means "another of like (or same) kind." Jesus was a Person and the Holy Spirit was "like" Him. The "Comforter" or "Helper" would provide a legal counsel for or defense and an advocate when we communicate with God (Romans 8:26). A mere "force" cannot plead our cause. The exact way in which this comfort comes is not specified in Scripture (Acts 9:31).













- 7)  **Determines** (1 Corinthians 12:7-11). The Holy Spirit determined which miraculous gifts were necessary and then gave them. This required intelligence which only a Person possesses.
- 8)  **Intercedes** (Romans 8:26-27). The Holy Spirit knows how to pray intellectually and goes to God for us. The Holy Spirit is able to know how to pray for us when we do not know what to say (when beset with anxiety, grief, etc.). He is able to do so in accordance with God's will, so He understands and fathoms those things which God desires. This knowledge plus ability proves the Holy Spirit's personality!

NOTE: These eight works are all impossible unless a Person is performing them. They require wisdom, action, ability, and understanding that are far beyond the scope of some impersonal "force" in the world. These are also beyond the scope of an "impulse" sent from God.

- c.  His **CHARACTER** indicates that He is a Person. In addition to the works just noticed, the Bible reveals that the Holy Spirit possesses certain character traits which reveal that He is a unique Person in the Godhead.
- 1)  He possesses **intelligence** (Romans 8:27; 1 Corinthians 2:11). This intelligence enabled the Apostles to preach and direct the writing of the Scriptures.
 - 2)  He possesses **emotions**. Throughout Scripture we read where the Holy Spirit displays emotions that are only found in a Person: love (Romans 15:30); grief or irritation (Ephesians 4:30; Isaiah 63:10); fellowship or common association (2 Corinthians 13:14; Philippians 2:1). A mere influence or force from an inanimate source is unable to demonstrate these emotions.
 - 3)  He possesses a **will** (1 Corinthians 12:11; Acts 16:7; 21:11-14). The Holy Spirit had the freedom to make a choice so the perfect way of God would be followed. No immaterial force can ever demonstrate this volition of choice!
 - 4)  He possesses **goodness** (Psalm 143:10; Nehemiah 9:20). An object has neither intrinsic good nor evil. However a Person has an intrinsic goodness/evil within. Once again a mere impersonal influence is incapable of possessing this.
- d.  His **IMPACT** upon others indicates that He is a Person. An inanimate object has a neutral impact—neither positive nor negative. But such is not true with the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures indicate that His impact is far from neutral.

 He can be...

- 1) Grieved (Ephesians 4:30; Isaiah 63:10).
- 2)  Despised (Hebrews 10:29).

- 3)  Blasphemed (Matthew 12:31, 32).
 - 4)  Lied to (Acts 5:3).
 - 5)  Obeyed (1 Thessalonians 1:5-6; 2:7- 13; 2 Thessalonians 2:14).
 - 6)  Resisted (Acts 7:51; Genesis 6:3).
- e.  His **NAMES** indicate that He is a Person. The Holy Spirit is given various names in Scripture and these describe the function and ministry of His role.
- 1) In the Old Testament He is named eighty-eight times; in the New Testament He is named 262 times.
 - 2) The names are indicators of a Person and not a force. God the Father and God the Son both have a number of different names which also indicate the various roles they perform. We are able to see that the Father and Son are distinct Persons because of their names, why are we not able to see this about the Holy Spirit?
3. Thus we conclude that the Holy Spirit is a Person. But this brings us to yet another basic question— “What kind of Person is the Holy Spirit?”
- a. There are three orders of "Persons" in all of creation—
- 1)  The Persons who constitute the Godhead to Whom the word "deity" alone applies.
 - 2)  The Persons of the angelic world (Hebrews 1:14).
 - 3)  The Persons of the human race (Genesis 2:7).
- b.  The Holy Spirit belongs to the first group—He is a Person to Whom the term "deity" applies. This is evident in the following observations.
- 1)  The Holy Spirit manifests certain traits which belong only to Deity...
 - a) Eternity (Hebrews 9:14; Psalm 99:2).
 - b) Omniscient (1 Corinthians 2:10, 11).
 - c) Omnipotent (Micah 3:8; Luke 1:35; Romans 15:19).
 - d) Omnipresent (Psalm 139:7ff; Jeremiah 23:24).
 - 2)  The Holy Spirit manifests certain works that belong only to Deity.
 - a) Creation (Genesis 1:2; Job 26:13; Psalm 33:4, 6)

- b) Providential working (Psalm 104:30)
 - c) Salvation from sin (John 3:5)
 - d) Resurrection (Romans 8:11)
 - e) Inspiration (2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16)
- 3) 🕊️ The Holy Spirit manifests associations which belong only to Deity. His associations and relationships with the Father and the Son imply a likeness and identification in attributes. This is why the Holy Spirit knows the mind of God (1 Corinthians 2:11).
4. 🕊️ As clear as the Personality of the Holy Spirit is in Scripture, many have "de-personalized" Him. This tragedy has resulted because of three general actions.
- a. 🕊️ The Spirit has been **LIMITED** to an unreasonable role—the equating of the Holy Spirit with the Bible *only*.

There have been those who claimed that the Holy Spirit WAS the Bible. They contended that the Holy Spirit did not exist outside of the written page.

Note: We must recognize that the Holy Spirit cannot exist in our lives apart from the Word, but we must not say the Holy Spirit is limited to the Word. The Bible alone cannot accomplish the roles set forth in Romans 8:26, but apart from the Bible the Holy Spirit cannot do Romans 8:26 either! Those who claim that the Holy Spirit works only through the Bible depersonalize the Holy Spirit.

- b. 🕊️ The Spirit has been the **OBJECT** of radical error.

A radical reaction to Calvinism and Pentecostalism has led some to affirm what the Holy Spirit CANNOT do while failing to affirm the positive acts which the Holy Spirit does do. In reaction to these two broad errors, which make the Holy Spirit solely an emotional experience ("better felt than told"), many taught about an intellectual Spirit that was void of all feelings. This indirectly taught that the Holy Spirit was emotionless and unfeeling; an empty void of Christianity. Such was logically rejected as unsatisfying to the deeper spiritual needs and is directly contradictory to biblical teaching.

- c. 🕊️ The Spirit has been presented as a **MAGICAL** charm.

"Magical" claims about the Holy Spirit has led some to seek new revelations, miraculous healings, instant spirituality, and a "healthy, wealthy, and wise" expectation of religion. These "boasts," depreciated the Holy Spirit and eventually placed Him on a purely materialistic level. Their false basis, when discovered, led to a rejection of the Holy Spirit by the honest searcher.

Note: These three practices have led many to confusion about the Holy Spirit. Seldom are the traits and characteristics of His Person considered. Instead the sensational is sought and, if not found, it is often invented. Many thus make the Holy Spirit a "sensation" instead of a "Person."

5. From the Scriptures beginning (Genesis 1:2) to their ending (Revelation 22:17) we see God, the Word, and the Holy Spirit as divine beings living, speaking, acting, influencing, blessing, reconciling, transforming, loving, and glorifying; the Holy Spirit is thus not "a thing" or "it", but a glorious person, the Holy Spirit (H. Leo Boles, *The Holy Spirit*, 30).