THE HOLY SPIRIT

Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to help you understand who the Holy Spirit is, why Jesus sent Him, and the essential role He plays in your life, so you can begin to experience the fullness of the relationship God intends for you to have with Him.

The Problem Many Face Today

Many believers know that the Holy Spirit is part of their Christian faith, but they may not realize what a difference His presence should make in their everyday lives. They know they should live for God, but often try to do so through their own strength, determination, and good intentions.

As a result:

- They don't recognize how much they need the Holy Spirit in their daily lives.
- They try to overcome old habits and struggles through their own efforts.
- They struggle to depend upon the Holy Spirit and experience the help and power He provides.
- They miss the transforming work He wants to accomplish in their lives.

Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to be our Helper and Guide. Yet many believers haven't come to understand the incredible gift God has given them or how essential His presence is to living the Christian life. They are trying to live a life that God never intended them to live on their own.

Personal Reflection

Take a few moments to think about your own relationship with the Holy Spirit.

1. How well do I understand who the Holy Spirit really is? Do I think of Him as God living within me, or do I think of Him more as a power or influence?
2. Do I understand why Jesus sent the Holy Spirit and what His presence means for my daily life?
3. When I face decisions, challenges, or difficult situations, do I depend primarily on my own understanding and strength, or do I look to the Holy Spirit for guidance?
4. Do I recognize when the Holy Spirit is guiding me? Am I confident in knowing how to listen and respond to His leading?
5. How much does my daily life reflect an awareness of and dependence upon the Holy Spirit?

Lesson Truth

John 16:7, 13 (ESV)

"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. "

"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come."

Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to live within every believer as our Helper and Guide. When we understand who He is and why Jesus sent Him, we can learn to depend upon Him, follow His guidance, and through surrender, experience the fullness of the relationship God intends for us to have with Him.

Lesson Goal

The goal of this lesson is for you to recognize and understand the gift of the Holy Spirit living within you, realize your need to depend upon Him, and become willing to surrender your life to Him so you can become more like Jesus.

Prayer for the Journey

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for giving us Your Holy Spirit to be our Helper and Guide. Forgive us for the times we have tried to live the Christian life in our own strength rather than depending upon Him.

Help us understand who the Holy Spirit is, why Jesus sent Him, and the role He is to play in our lives. Teach us to recognize His guidance, trust Him, and willingly surrender our thoughts, words, and actions to Your leadership each day.

Open our hearts and minds to Your truth. Help us not only understand what Your Word teaches us, but learn to live it out in our daily lives.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Jesus Sends the Holy Spirit

Before Jesus returned to the Father, He told His disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit to them. Jesus knew He would no longer be physically present with them, but He did not intend for them to be left alone. The Holy Spirit would come to be with them and live within them.

Jesus explained that His departure was necessary for the Holy Spirit to come.

John 16:7 (ESV)

"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you."

Jesus called the Holy Spirit the Helper. He also promised that the Spirit would be with His followers forever.

John 14:16–17 (ESV)

"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you."

Notice what Jesus promised: the Holy Spirit would not simply visit His followers from time to time. He would be with them forever and would live within them.

The Holy Spirit did not begin to exist or become active at Pentecost. He is God and has always existed. We see Him at work throughout the Old Testament, beginning with creation.

Genesis 1:2 (ESV)

"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."

What Jesus promised was something new in God's relationship with His people. Before Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was with the disciples. Jesus promised that He would be in them.

After His resurrection, Jesus told His disciples to wait for the promised Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:4–5 (ESV)

"And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, 'you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'"

That promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon the gathered believers.

Acts 2:1–4 (ESV)

"When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."

Pentecost changed the way the Holy Spirit would dwell among God's people. His presence would no longer be understood only through His work among God's people; under the new covenant, He would dwell within those who belong to Christ.

What This Means for Us

The Holy Spirit was not given only to the first disciples. God's Word teaches that everyone who belongs to Christ has the Holy Spirit living within them.

Romans 8:9 (ESV)

"You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him."

Jesus sent the Holy Spirit so that His followers would never be left to live the Christian life on their own. The Spirit is God's presence within us, our Helper and Guide, who helps us understand the truth and live in a way that pleases Him.

Who Is the Holy Spirit?

To understand the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we first need to understand who He is. The Holy Spirit is not simply a power, force, or influence from God. **The Holy Spirit is God.**

He is the third Person of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. They are distinct Persons, but share the same divine nature and character. They have different roles, but are one God.

The Holy Spirit Is God

The Bible makes it clear that the Holy Spirit is God. In Acts, Peter confronted Ananias for lying about the money he had received from selling a piece of property. Notice how Peter described what Ananias had done.

Acts 5:3–4 (ESV)

Peter first told Ananias that he had lied to the Holy Spirit. Then he said:

"But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? [4] While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God."

Peter's words establish that the Holy Spirit is God. He is not a lesser being or simply someone sent by God. He is fully divine.

The Holy Spirit Is a Person

The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force or simply a power we receive. He is a Person who relates to us and works in our lives.

Jesus described Him as our Helper and Teacher.

John 14:26 (ESV)

Jesus said that the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father would send in His name, would teach His followers and remind them of everything He had said.

The Holy Spirit teaches, guides, speaks, and helps us understand God's truth. He can also be grieved by our actions.

Ephesians 4:30 (ESV)

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

We are also warned:

1 Thessalonians 5:19 (ESV)

"Do not quench the Spirit."

These warnings remind us that our relationship with the Holy Spirit is personal. He is not a force we use or control. He is God, and our response to Him matters.

The Holy Spirit Shares God's Nature and Character

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are not three different gods. They share the same divine nature and character. God's holiness, love, goodness, wisdom, truth, and faithfulness are not different in one Person of the Trinity than in another.

The Holy Spirit does not merely bring us something from God. He is God, present and working in our lives.

The Holy Spirit Lives Within Every Believer

One of the most wonderful truths about the Holy Spirit is that He lives within everyone who belongs to Christ. His presence is not something we have to earn or achieve. It is God's gift to His children.

Romans 8:9 (ESV)

Paul teaches that everyone who belongs to Christ has the Spirit of Christ dwelling within them. Those who do not have the Spirit of Christ do not belong to Him.

The Holy Spirit's presence also gives us assurance that we are God's children.

Think about what this means. God Himself, through the Holy Spirit, lives within everyone who belongs to Christ. We are never left to face life on our own. His presence means that we have a personal relationship with God and that He is at work in our lives.

Romans 8:16 (ESV)

"The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."

Think about what this means. God Himself, through the Holy Spirit, lives within everyone who belongs to Christ. His presence assures us that we are God's children, that we have a personal relationship with Him, and that we are never left to face life on our own.

The Holy Spirit Is the Source of Divine Power

The Holy Spirit is God, and His power is God's power. He is not simply present within us; He is also the source of the divine power God provides for living the Christian life.

Jesus promised His disciples that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them.

Acts 1:8 (ESV)

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses…"

The Holy Spirit's power is not something separate from Him that we can control or use whenever we wish. It is His power working in and through us. We will look more closely at how He empowers us to live for Christ as we continue this lesson.

God never intended for us to live the Christian life through our own strength and determination. He knows that we need more than human effort to overcome sin, become more like Jesus, and accomplish what He calls us to do. That is why He has given us the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is God living within us, and His power enables us to live in a way that pleases God. As we learn to depend upon Him and follow His leading, He works in us and through us to accomplish God's purposes.

The Holy Spirit's power is not something we possess or control. We don't use His power to accomplish our own purposes. As we surrender to Him, depend upon Him, and follow His leading, His power works in and through us to accomplish God's purposes.

We don't wield His power; His power wields us.

The Holy Spirit Empowers Us to Live the Christian Life

Following Jesus involves more than trying harder or making better decisions. We need the Holy Spirit working within us to help us live the life God desires.

The Holy Spirit strengthens us inwardly, changes the way we think, and helps us develop a life that reflects the character of Jesus.

Ephesians 3:16 (ESV)

"That according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,"

Paul understood that living the Christian life requires strength that comes from the Holy Spirit, not simply our own determination and effort. The Spirit strengthens us inwardly so that our lives can increasingly reflect the character of Jesus.

The Fruit and Gifts of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit works in our lives in two important ways. He develops Christlike character within us, and He equips us to serve others. The Bible describes these as the Fruit of the Spirit and the Gifts of the Spirit.

Although they are closely related, they are not the same. The Fruit describes the character the Holy Spirit develops in us. The Gifts describe how He equips us to serve others and accomplish God's purposes.

The Fruit of the Spirit: Developing Christlike Character

One of the most important works of the Holy Spirit is changing us from within so that our lives increasingly reflect the character of Jesus.

When we become Christians, we don't suddenly become perfect. We still face struggles, temptations, and the need to grow. But the Holy Spirit is at work within us, helping us become more like Christ.

Paul describes the character the Holy Spirit develops in our lives.

Galatians 5:22–23 (ESV)

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."

Think about a fruit tree. When a tree is healthy and its branches are connected to the tree, fruit grows naturally in its season. The branches don't manufacture the fruit through their own effort. They bear the fruit because they are part of a living tree and receive what they need to grow.

The same principle helps us understand the Fruit of the Spirit. We cannot produce Christlike character simply by trying harder or exercising our willpower. The Holy Spirit develops these qualities in us as we live in a relationship of surrender and obedience to Him. Our part is to remain dependent upon Him, follow His leading, and allow Him to work in our lives. The fruit is the result of His work within us.

Let's consider what these qualities look like in everyday life:

- **Love:** Caring for others and seeking their good, even when it is difficult.
- **Joy:** Having an inner gladness rooted in our relationship with God, not simply in our circumstances.
- **Peace:** Trusting God and experiencing His peace even when life is difficult.
- **Patience:** Being willing to wait and to respond calmly when people or circumstances test us.
- **Kindness:** Treating others with consideration, compassion, and care.
- **Goodness:** Choosing what is right and pleasing to God.
- **Faithfulness:** Being dependable and remaining true to God and to others.
- **Gentleness:** Treating others with humility, tenderness, and consideration rather than harshness.
- **Self-control:** Learning to control our desires, words, and actions rather than allowing them to control us.

These qualities are evidence of the Holy Spirit's work within us. As we depend upon Him, surrender our will, and follow His leading, He develops Christlike character in our lives.

The goal is not merely to become a nicer person. It is to become more like Jesus.

The Gifts of the Spirit: Equipping Us to Serve

The Holy Spirit not only works within us to develop Christlike character; He also equips us to serve others. He gives spiritual gifts to believers so they can contribute to the work God is doing through His people.

Paul explains this in his letter to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 12:7–11 (ESV)

"To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is

given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills."

Notice several important truths in this passage.

Spiritual gifts are given for the common good.

The gifts are not given to make us look important or to draw attention to ourselves. They are given so we can serve others and help build up the body of Christ.

The Holy Spirit gives different gifts to different believers.

Not everyone receives the same gift. The passage describes several different gifts, and the Holy Spirit distributes them according to His will.

The Holy Spirit determines how the gifts are distributed.

We do not choose our spiritual gifts or decide how they should be given. The Holy Spirit apportions them to each person as He wills. Our responsibility is to use what He has given us faithfully, with humility and love, for the benefit of others.

As the Holy Spirit works through us and the gifts He has given us become evident, we must guard against pride. Our attention should never become fixed on the gifts or on ourselves. Our focus must remain on the Giver, and our gifts should always be used to serve others.

Spiritual gifts are not a measure of how mature or spiritual someone is. A person may have a particular gift and still need to grow in Christlike character. That is why we should never allow the gifts to become more important than the character the Holy Spirit is developing within us.

We need both. We need the Fruit of the Spirit to become more like Jesus, and we need the Gifts of the Spirit to serve others as God intends.

As we surrender to Him and follow His leading, our character increasingly reflects Jesus, and our lives become useful in serving others and accomplishing God's purposes.

The Fruit shows the character He develops in us. The Gifts show how He equips us to serve.

Daily Surrender

Surrender is not simply giving up things or changing certain behaviors. It begins internally, with a surrendered heart. When we came to Christ in repentance and faith, we surrendered our lives to Him as Lord and Savior. That surrender was not meant to end when we were born again. It is the beginning of a surrendered life. We continue yielding ownership, authority, and our will to God rather than reserving certain areas of our lives for ourselves. This is internal surrender. It must also be expressed in the way we live. Our thoughts, attitudes, choices, words, and actions become outward expressions of that inward commitment. This is external surrender.

The Holy Spirit already lives within everyone who belongs to Christ. We don't surrender to receive Him or keep Him in our lives. We

surrender because we belong to God and want our lives to reflect His leadership. Daily surrender carries forward the commitment we made when we came to Christ. As we learn to live by the Holy Spirit, we become increasingly willing to yield every area of our lives to Him. **We don't graduate from surrender. We grow into it.**

A surrendered heart is essential to living by the Holy Spirit. If we are unwilling to yield our will, our choices, and the direction of our lives to God, we cannot truly follow the Spirit's leadership. We cannot live by the Spirit while insisting on living by our own terms. As we surrender ourselves to God, we become willing to depend on the Holy Spirit and follow His direction.

Living by the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is not simply someone we call upon when we need help. He lives within every believer and desires to be actively involved in our daily lives. God never intended us to live the Christian life through our own strength and determination. He gave us His Spirit so we could experience His presence, help, guidance, and power.

As you begin to understand who the Holy Spirit is and why Jesus sent Him, you may find yourself asking an important question:

What does it actually mean to live by the Holy Spirit?

It means more than knowing He lives within you. It means more than knowing He lives within you. It involves learning to trust Him, depend upon Him, recognize His guidance, and follow where He leads.

That's where we're going next. In our next lesson, *The Spirit-Directed Life*, we'll explore what it means to walk with the Holy Spirit in the ordinary circumstances of everyday life.

God has not asked you to figure out the Christian life and live it on your own. He has given you His Spirit. Learning to live in the reality of His presence is a journey worth taking—one step at a time.

Action Step: Begin Living by the Holy Spirit

You have learned that the Holy Spirit lives within you as your Helper, Teacher, and Guide. God did not intend for you to live the Christian life in your own strength. He gave you His Spirit so you could depend upon Him and experience the relationship He intends for you to have with Him.

This week, begin paying attention to His presence in your life.

Begin tomorrow and each day with surrender. Acknowledge that your life belongs to God. Yield your plans, thoughts, attitudes, and decisions to Him.

Spend time in God's Word and prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand God's truth and apply it to your life. Read one chapter a day from the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. If you are not sure where to start, begin with John. Then rotate through the other Gospels.

Pay attention throughout the day. When you face a decision, struggle with an attitude, encounter a temptation, or recognize an opportunity to do what is right, stop for a moment and remember that the Holy Spirit lives within you. Turn to Him for help and direction.

Respond to what God shows you. When God's Word reveals something you need to change, or you recognize an opportunity to

respond in a way that pleases Him, don't ignore it. Take a step of obedience.

You don't have to understand everything about living by the Holy Spirit today. Begin by recognizing His presence, learning to depend upon Him, and willingly yielding your life to His direction. When we neglect the things necessary to live by the Holy Spirit, we leave ourselves vulnerable to the many pitfalls of this world. We can become trapped by things that draw us away from God and miss the amazing peace and joy that come from living in close fellowship with Him. Living by the Spirit requires more than knowing what we should do. It requires a willingness to follow His leadership and respond to His direction.

One day at a time and one step at a time, learn to live by the Spirit who lives within you.

Illustrations for Living the Truth

1. David — Learning to Surrender His Need For Control

David had been married for twenty-eight years and had two grown children. He considered himself a good provider and a hard worker. He loved his family, but there was something he struggled to recognize about himself: he often expected things to go his way.

When things didn't, he could become impatient, critical, and angry. He believed he was simply trying to keep things running smoothly, but his family sometimes experienced him as controlling and difficult to please.

During a Bible study, David was challenged by James 1:19–20:

"Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God."

For the first time, David began to see that his anger wasn't simply a reaction to other people's behavior. His pride and desire for control were part of the problem. He wanted others to change, but God was showing him that his own heart needed to change.

As David began to recognize these things, the Holy Spirit brought conviction to areas of his life he had been unwilling to surrender. David realized that following Christ meant more than believing the right things. It meant yielding his attitudes, expectations, and desire for control to God.

The change didn't happen overnight. David still had moments when his old reactions surfaced. But he was becoming more aware of how his attitudes affected others, more willing to acknowledge when he was wrong, and more willing to apologize rather than defend himself.

Over time, his family began to notice a difference. He was becoming more patient, more willing to listen, and less concerned about having things his way.

David was learning that he couldn't produce Christlike character simply by trying harder. The Holy Spirit was at work within him, changing his heart and developing qualities that reflected the character of Jesus.

That is the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. As we surrender ourselves to God, He develops in us the character of Christ.

2. Susan — Learning to Live for God's Approval

Susan is a devoted wife, mother, and church member. She is always willing to help others,

but she has difficulty saying no. She worries about disappointing people and often feels responsible for keeping everyone happy. Although she loves God, she has gradually allowed other people's expectations to direct much of her life.

While reading a devotional about fellowship with the Holy Spirit, Susan considers Galatians 1:10. She begins to recognize that many of her decisions have been shaped more by what people expect of her than by her desire to please God. She has confused being loving and helpful with always saying yes.

As the Holy Spirit brings this truth to her attention, Susan begins to see how much her desire for people's approval has influenced her choices. She realizes that she has been allowing the expectations of others to take a place in her life that belongs to God. She knows something needs to change.

Susan begins to surrender her need for everyone's approval and trust that pleasing God matters more than keeping everyone happy. This isn't always easy. When she declines a request because she has another important commitment, she still feels guilty and is tempted to change her mind. But she is learning that loving others doesn't mean accepting responsibility for every expectation they place on her.

Gradually, Susan becomes more thoughtful about her commitments. She finds greater freedom in serving others because she is no longer driven by the fear of disappointing them. Her desire to please God is becoming more important than her desire to gain everyone's approval. She experiences greater peace and discovers more joy in serving others with a willing heart.

The Holy Spirit is changing what motivates Susan. He is developing in her a greater freedom to love and serve others without being controlled by their expectations.

That is the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. As we surrender our lives to God, He changes our hearts and develops in us the character of Christ.

Important Teaching Point

Both stories illustrate that outward behavior often has deeper beliefs and attitudes beneath it.

- David must surrender his desire to control others.
- Susan must surrender her desire to be approved by others.

Both learn to examine their thinking, replace wrong beliefs with God's truth, and depend on the Holy Spirit in everyday situations.

Include the blessing of transformation: As we become more like Jesus, we can experience increasingly consistent peace and joy. Our circumstances may not change, but our hearts, attitudes, and responses begin to change. We become less controlled by old patterns and more able to live in the freedom God intends for us.

The stories should make clear that this is a gradual journey of dependence and obedience, not instant perfection.

The ultimate goal isn't simply to become less angry or less concerned about people's approval. The goal is to become more like Jesus.

Other Scripture Verses

The following Scriptures provide additional insight into the presence, work, and transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

- **John 15:26** — The Holy Spirit testifies about Jesus.
- **John 16:13** — The Holy Spirit guides believers into truth.
- **2 Timothy 1:14** — The Holy Spirit dwells within believers.
- **2 Thessalonians 2:13** — The Holy Spirit's work in our sanctification.
- **2 Corinthians 3:17** — The freedom found where the Spirit of the Lord is.
- **Romans 8:9–11** — The Holy Spirit lives within believers and gives life.
- **Romans 8:13–16** — The Holy Spirit leads us and assures us that we belong to God.
- **Galatians 5:16–18** — Living by the Spirit rather than following the desires of the flesh.
- **Romans 15:13** — God gives us joy and peace in believing, and through the Holy Spirit's power we abound in hope.
- **Romans 8:26–27** — The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness and intercedes for us.