

The Holy Spirit

There is much misunderstanding concerning the third Person of the Trinity, and as a result, He is the most neglected member of the Godhead. Because of a lack of biblical understanding, some refer to the Holy Spirit as an “it” or look upon Him as some impersonal force. To be effective in any area of discipleship, a biblical understanding of the Holy Spirit and His ministry is essential.

In theological circles, a study of the third Person of the Trinity is called “pneumatology.” The Greek word for spirit (PNEUMA) is the word from which we get our English word “pneumatic.” The word has the idea of an intangible force that has great power.

In a study of the Holy Spirit, we need to look carefully at John 14–16. There we can find more insight into the ministry of the Holy Spirit than in any other section of the New Testament. Therefore, read the following scripture references, and explain what they tell us about the Holy Spirit.

John 14:26: _____

John 15:26: _____

John 16:7: _____

The word Comforter (or Counselor) in John 16:7 comes from a Greek word (PARAKLĒTOS, par-ahk'-lay-tos), which literally means “calling to one’s side, consolation, or comforter.” The Holy Spirit therefore encourages and exhorts, and people filled with the Holy Spirit will do likewise. A Christian who is filled with God’s Holy Spirit will not continually complain, gripe, or put down other people.

The Holy Spirit never draws attention to Himself; that would be contrary to His mission. Likewise, a disciple who is genuinely filled with the Holy Spirit will not be constantly talking about the Holy Spirit or drawing attention to the Spirit. Instead, a person who is filled with the Holy Spirit will be constantly talking about and glorifying whom (John 15:26 & 16:13–14)?

We will begin our study of God’s Holy Spirit by looking at ...

I. The Work, or Ministry, of the Holy Spirit

There is a tremendous difference between the work of the Holy Spirit before and after the Day of Pentecost. That difference can best be seen in the lives of the disciples. For example, at the feeding of the 5,000, the disciples had no faith (Lk 9). According to Matthew 13, they could not understand Jesus’ parables. In John 17, they could not comprehend that Jesus and the Father are one. Also, in John 13 they were puzzled at the humility of Jesus in washing their feet.

Knowing these things about the disciples, we can better understand why they were so distressed when Jesus told them in John 14 that He would soon be leaving them. If they had so little faith and understanding of spiritual truth while Jesus was physically in their presence, what would they be like when He was gone?

However, looking carefully at John 14:18, we discover something very interesting. The Greek word translated comfortless (ORPHANOS, or-fan-os') is the word from which we derive our English word "orphan." Just as physical babies need physical parents to help them adjust and learn how to live in the physical world, so spiritual babies need spiritual parents to teach them about spiritual things.

It is because of this great need that Jesus makes one of the great Bible promises in John 14:16–17. Read this promise, and explain it below:

There are two important things Jesus said the Holy Spirit would do for the believer when He came.

First, His work would be one of encouragement, as already mentioned. The disciples were going to face seemingly insurmountable trials, and Jesus knew they could not do it alone. So, He promised them the Holy Spirit, who would be in them to give them the power to stand against adversity and perplexity. Despite difficulties and threatened hostilities, the Holy Spirit would bring them courage and peace.

The real miracle on the Day of Pentecost is often missed because so many people do not really understand the ministry of the Holy Spirit in this world. The real miracle on the Day of Pentecost was not the cloven tongues of fire or the rushing mighty wind. What was the real miracle? Read Matthew 26:69–75; John 20:19 and Acts 2:14–21 & 41, and explain:

The second work of the Holy Spirit is guidance. He is our connection with heaven. Without the Holy Spirit, there would be no revelation, no conviction of sin, no sanctification, and no fruitful works. He is, therefore, the most significant and important factor in discipleship because He is the Link between the disciple and God the Father.

Read the following references, and list the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ:

John 16:7–8: _____

John 16:13: _____

From the above scriptures, we can quickly see that without the Holy Spirit we as disciples would be helpless orphans.

Now that we have studied the work of the Holy Spirit, let's examine ...

II. The Filling of the Holy Spirit

In Ephesians 5:18, believers are commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit. How can we be filled with the Holy Spirit? To answer this question we must first understand what it means to grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30). The word grieve means "to cause to feel grief, or to distress." After Paul tells the believers not to grieve the Holy Spirit, he lists some sins that grieve Him and prevent believers from being filled with the Holy Spirit. Read Ephesians 4:31, and list these sins:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

It is probably surprising to most of us that Paul does not include stealing, adultery, murder, etc. in this list. Why? Because few disciples of Jesus Christ would be guilty of the more obvious sins, but we are all involved at one time or another in bitterness, anger, slander, etc. Therefore, we need to listen carefully to what the Holy Spirit says specifically to each of us in Ephesians 4:31.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit is the clear command of Ephesians 5:18. The verb be filled is present tense, which means "continuous action." This denotes we must be filled continuously or daily with God's Spirit. Also, be filled means "to be controlled by." For example, a person can be filled with compassion or filled with anger. If you are filled with the Spirit, what characteristics will be manifested in your life, according to Ephesians 4:32 & 5:19-21?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Based on our study of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, list three ways He will help you be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

MEMORY VERSE: Ephesians 5:18