

IS THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR REAL?



Both the Old and New Testaments affirm the reality that God's Holy Spirit gives power and strength when we need it most. God does not exempt us from tests, trials and temptations, but He gives strength to endure, to be victorious, to persevere in hard times. Through His Spirit God took Gideon who was reluctant to lead and gave him courage (Judges 6:34). He made Samson, a physically strong man, powerful enough to kill a lion when the Spirit "rushed upon him" (Judges 14:6). He took Bezaele, already an accomplished artisan, filled him with the Spirit, and gave him skill and intelligence, to create furnishings for the tabernacle (Exodus 31:1-11). The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus Christ, enabling Him to accomplish God's plan for His life (John 1:32-33). Today the Holy Spirit is God's power to strengthen us in the inner being (Ephesians 3:16).

As an apple tree produces apples, so the Holy Spirit produces His quali-

ties in our lives. We all need these characteristics! The Bible says: **"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control"** (Galatians 5:22-23). While some qualities may be formed by our upbringing, none can be acquired to the extent that we need them without the Holy Spirit.

These qualities make good people better, marriages stronger and parents more effective. God's Spirit makes better neighbors, helps young people exercise self-control and fills the aged with peace. The Holy Spirit is God's key to the greatest life! One cannot buy these inner qualities. God gives His Spirit to those who "obey Him" (Acts 5:32).

How can we help you obey God?

— David Tarbet, Editor
New Milford, Connecticut

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?



A lot of people are not quite sure who or what the Holy Spirit is. We can't 'see' a spirit so who or what is it? The good news is the scriptures make it very clear that the Spirit is not an "it." He is alive and functional in the history of mankind. At the very beginning of creation, the Bible says: "The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2). Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light (Genesis 1:3). The pre-incarnate Jesus was there too — He "was in the beginning with God; all things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:3). God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit were all present and active in creation.

As time went on God's inspired word was written down and preserved. That preservation was no accident. God saw to it that 40 different writers over 1600 years of time did the impossible...told one amazing story that led straight to Jesus, God's Son coming to save us from our sins. That could not have happened without the Holy Spirit. "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).

All though the Bible we understand that the Holy Spirit is a living separate, 'personality' and part of God just like the Father and the Son. 1 Timothy 4:1 tells us, "Now the Spirit expressly *says* that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons." Impersonal "forces" do not have prophetic knowledge and speak a warning to us.

"The Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And He who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:26-27). The Holy Spirit loves and cares for each of us as God's children. And we love Him for that.

—Randy Gardner, Minister
Upper Valley Church of Christ
Quechee, Vermont

A photograph of a man in a white shirt being baptized in a river. The water is splashing around him, and the scene is captured from an overhead perspective. The text "HOW DO I RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT?" is overlaid in large, bold, yellow-outlined letters across the middle of the image.

HOW DO I RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Some believers mistakenly think receiving the Holy Spirit is an emotional experience. They think the Holy Spirit can be invited into their hearts to save them.

As we contemplate how we receive the Holy Spirit, we need to understand that as we obey God He gives us the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:32). The apostle Peter declared: “Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38). In the Bible baptism is by immersion (The New Testament was written in Greek and this is the literal meaning of the original Greek word). When our faith in Christ leads us to be immersed we become the children of God (Galatians 3:26-27).

Because we are the children of God He sends the Spirit of His Son into our hearts (Galatians 4:6). All who are the children of God are “sealed” with the promised Holy Spirit in

preparation for the coming day of redemption (Ephesians 1:13-14). As one becomes a Christian by the power of the Holy Spirit he abounds in hope (Romans 15:13). Through the Spirit, faithful Christians eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by Spirit (Galatians 5:5).

By becoming a member of the kingdom of God one knows righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). Those who are imitators of the Lord receive the joy of the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 1:6.)

In conclusion, To receive the Holy Spirit, one must obey the gospel of Christ by believing in Jesus Christ, repenting of one’s sins and being baptized into Jesus Christ. Our hope is that you will become a Christian, a member of the kingdom of God, an imitator of the Lord, so that you will receive the Holy Spirit and be ready for the coming day of redemption.

— Nat John Kissi, Minister
Church of Christ, Worcester, Massachusetts

“WILL THE SPIRIT HELP ME”?

After the Jews came back from Babylon (538 BC) they needed to rebuild the temple. So God worked through the prophet Zechariah to encourage the returning exiles. It seemed an impossible task, not just in getting all the materials together and the masons to do it, but also in combating great opposition from neighboring enemies. God sent an angel to Zechariah with the answer on how it could be done. “‘Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts.”(Zechariah 4:6) God revealed to Zechariah the only way the temple could be rebuilt - by the help of His Spirit.

There are some things we can't do on our own by sheer will power. Sometimes we need supernatural power. I'm so thankful that our gracious heavenly Father gives His Spirit to enable us to do the things we cannot do on our own.

It's noteworthy that there's only one thing recorded in the Bible that Jesus' disciples asked to be taught. They said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray. (I think they understood that there was a connection between His prayer life and the power in His life.) So Jesus taught them the “Our Father” and then shared a parable encouraging them not to give up

asking in prayer. He followed it all up with something very important to grasp: “If you, then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” (Luke 11:13) Where does the power come from to overcome temptation, to grow spiritually, to cope with life's trials, and to overcome discouragement? Might it be by seeking the Spirit's help? Paul, an apostle, wrote to the church in Ephesus:

“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, that according to the riches of His glory He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being.” (Ephesians 3:14-16)

What a magnificent prayer! It's prayer that unleashes the Spirit to do His work in our lives. It's a prayer that Christians need to pray for ourselves and others every day. The first thing we should do when we wake up, before our feet even touch the floor, is to pray and ask God to fill us with His Spirit. The Spirit will help. Don't fail to ask!

— Mike Mullens, Minister
Church of Christ, Fall River, MA

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the Lord of Host.



THE SPIRIT SPEAKS TODAY

“Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says...” (Hebrews 3:7). Among other important lessons, this text illustrates that the Holy Spirit speaks to man. The fact that He speaks today is foundational in Christianity, I hope you consider the following brief thoughts.

Hebrews 3:7-11 is one example for us to consider. After acknowledging that what follows are the words of the Holy Spirit, the writer points back to portions of the Old Testament scriptures. Why is this important? It illustrates the same concept taught by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 3:1-6. He urged Christians to read his writing because he received it by revelation from the Spirit, similar to other apostles and prophets. Through his writing, they had access to the message of the Spirit.

The pattern above is the dominant pattern seen throughout the entire scripture. The Spirit revealed information to select groups, such as the apostles or prophets, and they transmitted that message through oral and written messages. One then had access to the communication of the Spirit via hearing or reading those messages (see 2 Peter 1:21).

How does the Spirit speak today? We have the teaching of Jesus preserved by the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. We have the heart of the gospel message seen in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. More importantly, we have statements given in scripture that demonstrate completeness regarding the Spirit’s message to mankind. The sacred writings can make one wise for salvation and all Scripture can equip Christians for every good work (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

Does the Spirit speak today? Absolutely! In His message, the Bible, He directs us to find His voice everyday in His inspired words. He speaks to Christians today only through His inspired message. I strive to trust Him as He points me back to His word. I try to honor Him by living out His lessons. I endeavor to respect Him by not listening for His voice in places that He has not directed me to look.

Do you want to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5.18)? Then compare the parallel thought in Colossians 3:16 “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.”

— Rob Berghorst, Associate Minister
Church of Christ, Manchester, CT

STRENGTHENED BY THE SPIRIT



The Spirit is a gift bestowed at baptism so that we will be able to accomplish God's will as children of God (Acts 2:38-39). The Holy Spirit is a guarantee of one's salvation and eternal life (Ephesians 1:13-14).

How does the Holy Spirit strengthen the child of God to overcome the schemes of Satan and gain victory in Jesus Christ?

We must take up the whole armor of God. The apostle Paul wrote: "...take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" and "pray at all times in the Spirit with all prayer and supplication." Two avenues readily available in the spiritual struggle against Satan are God's word and prayer whose source is the Holy Spirit. Romans 5: 1-11 tells us: "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us....."

The promised inheritance is set forth: "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the

earth. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:1-3). Peter clearly affirms this whole train of thought: "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence, by which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire" (II Peter 1:3-4).

The gift of the Holy Spirit at baptism gives us access to God's transforming power in our lives so that we can overcome every temptation of Satan and escape the corrupting nature of sin leading to eternal death. Eternal life is found in the Holy Spirit bestowed by God.

— Keith Book, Minister
Church of Christ, Caribou, Maine

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