

You might as well try to hear without ears or breathe without lungs, as try to live a Christian life without the Spirit of God in your heart. — D. L. Moody

## Introduction

Someone once articulated that the average church member's understanding of the Holy Spirit is so vague it is nearly non-existent. Imagine a conversation with a Jehovah witness (JW); it might go something like this. JW: The word Trinity never appears in the Bible and is a myth. Christian: While you are correct that the word Trinity itself never occurs in the Bible the Bible teaches that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are separate persons but one God. JW: The Holy Spirit is merely God's "active force"<sup>1</sup> kind of like electricity but not a separate person. Christian: Really! I am not sure; that doesn't sound right. I will have to get back to you on that.

Whether we know it or like it or not non-trinitarian groups are confronting Christians with such issues like this every day in person and in writings posted on the internet. A Unitarian website tries to convincingly offer thirty four "biblical" and historical reasons why the Holy Spirit is not a person.<sup>2</sup>

The study of the Holy Spirit in theological terminology is called *pneumatology*. The study of the Holy Spirit raises certain basic questions. Who is the Holy Spirit? What is the biblical evidence for the personhood of the Spirit? What did the Holy Spirit do in regard to creation and revelation? What is the Holy Spirit's role in a person's conversion and sanctification? What about spiritual gifts? These are some of the issues that this lesson is going to cover.

## The Personhood and Deity of the Spirit

First things first. The Holy Spirit is a member of the Trinity and as such is a person.

The Spirit has attributes that only a person could have.

He has intelligence ([1 Cor 2:10-13](#)),

feelings ([Eph 4:30](#)),

and a will ([1 Cor 12:11](#); [Acts 16:6-12](#)).

He prays ([Rom 8:26](#)).

He does miracles ([Acts 8:39](#)).

He can be lied to ([Acts 5:3](#)).

He can be insulted ([Heb 10:29](#)).

He teaches and directs ([John 14:26](#); [Acts 8:29](#); [Rom 8:14](#)).

Let's look at two of these examples. In [1 Cor 12:11](#) Paul describes the Holy's Spirit's role in distributing spiritual gifts: "It is one and the same Spirit, distributing as he decides to each person, who produces all these things" ([1 Cor 12:11](#)). Here the Holy Spirit is seen "deciding" what gifts to gift to each person. In other words,

the Holy Spirit has a will, which is one characteristic of a person. In [Acts 5:3](#) the Holy Spirit is directly equated with God. Here in the early formation of the church Peter is rebuking two individuals who state that they had given more than they actually had: “But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back for yourself part of the proceeds from the sale of the land? Before it was sold, did it not belong to you? And when it was sold, was the money not at your disposal? How have you thought up this deed in your heart? You have not lied to people but to *God!*’” ([Acts 5:3-4](#)). Notice two aspects about these verses. The first is that the Holy Spirit is lied to. This means that the Holy Spirit is personal. You cannot lie to a table or to electricity because it is not a person. The second aspect is that lying to the Holy Spirit is equated with lying to God. This means that the Holy Spirit is God.

## The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament:

### Creation, Revelation and Filling

In the very first verses of the Bible the Holy Spirit is seen as involved in the creation of the universe. There we read: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was without shape and empty, and darkness was over the surface of the watery deep, but the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the water” ([Gen 1:1-2](#)). In another place Elihu says to Job: The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life ([Job 33:4](#) cf. [Gen 2:7](#)). In fact the Hebrew word for “spirit” (*ruach*) can also be translated as breath or wind. The same is true in Greek (*pneuma*) in the Greek Old Testament and Greek New Testament. The significance of this is that breath is what gives life to a body.

In regard to the revelation of God’s word the Holy Spirit also has a role. In citing [Psalm 2](#) Peter and John state “Master, who said by the Holy Spirit through your servant David our forefather, ‘*Why do the nations rage, and the peoples plot foolish things*’” ([Acts 4:25](#)). Here the Psalm is said to be *by the Holy Spirit through David*. The human author David is described as the intermediate source of the message while the Holy Spirit is the source that channeled it to him. In citing [Psalm 95](#), similarly the author of Hebrews states, “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “*Oh, that today you would listen as he speaks!*” ([Heb 3:7](#)). In this passage even though the Psalmist writes the message the Holy Spirit “says” it.

In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit filled individuals for various kinds of service and in some cases this filling is explicitly seen as temporary. A good example of the temporary nature of the filling of the Spirit in the Old Testament occurred in the life of Israel’s first king, Saul. The record of it starts in the book of First Samuel: “Then the spirit of God rushed upon Saul and he prophesied among them” (1 Sam 10:9). But later after Saul’s disobedience to God the Spirit of God departed from him: “Now the Spirit of the Lord had turned away from [departed] Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him” ([1 Sam 16:14](#)). Apparently, the next King of Israel, David, learned from Saul’s example. After David’s sin of adultery (and murder) with Bathsheba he recorded a prayer found in [Psalm 51](#), “Do not reject me! Do not take your Holy Spirit away from me” ([Ps 51:11](#)). David did not want what happened to Saul happen to him. However, a temporary filling of the Spirit seen in the Old Testament era should not be confused with the baptism of the Spirit in the church age ([Acts 2](#)). This baptism is a permanent act of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. So Christians can be assured that the Holy Spirit will not be taken from them (cf. [Eph 1:13-14](#)).

# The Work of the Holy Spirit in regard to Man's Salvation

The Bible also describes the Holy Spirit as very active in man's salvation. In fact, the Spirit is indispensable for anyone to be saved. His work can be divided into three general categories of activity: his pre-conversion work, conversion work and post-conversion work.

## The Pre-Conversion Work of the Holy Spirit

Prior to anyone placing his or her faith in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is involved in setting the conditions that allow for someone's faith response to the gospel. One of these roles is the convicting of sin and truth. John states, "And He (The Helper = Holy Spirit), when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged" ([John 16:8-10](#); NASB). One could supplement this idea with the concept that the Holy Spirit speaks to individuals through the preaching of the gospel. Paul writes to the Thessalonians "our gospel did not come to you merely in words, but in power and in the Holy Spirit" ([1 Thess 1:5](#)).<sup>3</sup>

## The Conversion Work of the Holy Spirit

Regeneration may be defined as "the impartation of new life" or "the washing of the new birth." This washing and new life is accomplished by the Holy Spirit. The primary verse that supports this is from Paul's letter to Titus. He states, "He [God] saved us not by works of righteousness that we have done but on the basis of his mercy, through the washing of the new birth and the renewing of the Holy Spirit" ([Titus 3:5](#)). While some theologians place regeneration prior to faith which results in conversion, it's probably better to see regeneration as equated to conversion itself. In Acts Peter states, "Repent, and each one of you be baptized 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](#)). Here, the gift of the Holy Spirit is conditioned upon repentance in relation to the gospel preaching of Peter.

Upon conversion the believer in Jesus Christ is said to be baptized into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit. This baptism is a one time event in which metaphorically speaking Christ becomes our head and we are joined with believers as fellow members of the body. Paul states, "For in [or by] one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. Whether Jews or Greeks or slaves or free, we were all made to drink of the one Spirit" ([1 Cor 12:13](#)). This baptism forms our union with Christ and with fellow believers. Related to the baptism of the Spirit is the indwelling of the Spirit. Upon and after conversion, the Holy Spirit indwells the life of the believer. Paul reminds the Corinthian church, "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?" ([1 Cor 3:16](#)). In the book of Romans Paul adds, "You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, this person does not belong to him" ([Rom 8:9](#)). One could say that the indwelling Spirit is the definition of a Christian.

Believers, who are indwelt with the Holy Spirit, are also sealed with the Holy Spirit. Paul writes, "And when you heard the word of truth (the gospel of your salvation) – when you believed in Christ – you were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit, who is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of his glory" ([Eph 1:13-14](#)). Sealing communicates God's mark of permanent ownership on us. The Holy Spirit is also described in these verses as a pledge or down payment that insures that God will complete his salvific work in us.

### **Facts about the Holy Spirit**

1. The Holy Spirit is a Person. [Jn. 16:7](#)
2. He is the Omnipresent God. [Ps. 139:7](#)
3. He is the Eternal Spirit. [Heb. 9:14](#)
4. He is the Lord. [2 Cor. 3:17](#)
5. He is the Spirit of God. [2 Cor. 3:3](#)
6. He is Christ's Spirit. [1 Pet. 1:11](#)
7. He is the Creating spirit. [Job. 33:4](#)

### **Third Person of the Trinity**

1. “. . . baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy spirit.” [Mt. 28:19](#)
2. “. . . Christ. . . the Spirit. . . the testimony of God.” [1 Jn. 5:6-9](#)
3. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God. . . fellowship of the Holy Spirit. . . .” [2 Cor. 13:14](#)

### **Father and the Holy Spirit**

1. In the creation. [Gen. 1:1-2](#)
2. In the dwelling. [Gen. 6:3](#)
3. In the anointing. [Isa. 61:1](#)
4. In the speaking. [Mt. 10:20](#)
5. In the giving. [Jn. 14:16](#)

### **The Holy Spirit and Christ**

1. Christ was born through the Holy Spirit. [Lk. 1:35](#)
2. He was full of the Holy Spirit. [Lk. 4:1](#)
3. He was led by the Spirit. [Lk. 4:1](#)
4. He was anointed by the Spirit. [Lk. 4:18](#)
5. He did good by the Spirit. [Acts 10:38](#)
6. He died thro' the Spirit. [Heb. 9:14](#)
7. He was raised by the Spirit. [Rom. 8:11](#)

### **Titles of the Holy Spirit**

1. He is the Spirit of truth. [Jn. 14:17](#)
2. He is the Spirit of grace. [Heb. 10:29](#)
3. He is the Spirit of glory. [1 Pet. 4:14](#)
4. He is the Spirit of the living God. [2 Cor. 3:3](#)
5. He is the Spirit of understanding. [Is. 11:2](#)
6. He is the Spirit of counsel. [Is. 11:2](#)
7. He is the Spirit of knowledge. [Is. 11:2](#)
8. He is the Spirit of the fear of the Lord. [Is. 11:2](#)
9. He is the Spirit of Judgment. [Is. 4:4](#)
10. He is the Spirit of fire. [Is. 4:4](#)
11. He is the Spirit of Wisdom and revelation. [Eph. 1:17](#)
12. He is the Spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline. [2 Tim. 1:7](#)

## Work of the Holy Spirit

1. BRINGS CONVICTION “He will convict. . .” [Jn. 16:8](#).
2. GIVES GIFTS. “. . .he gives them. . .” [1 Cor. 12:11](#).
3. TESTIFIES ABOUT CHRIST. “. . .the Spirit of truth. . . testify about Me.” [Jn. 15:26](#)
4. RENEWS US. “. . .renewal by the Holy Spirit” [Tit. 3:5](#).
5. GLORIFIES CHRIST. “He will bring glory to Me” [Jn. 16:14](#).
6. REVEALS US. “revealed it to us by his Spirit” [1 Cor. 2:9-10](#).
7. TEACHES US. “. . .will teach you all things” [Jn. 14:26](#).
8. GIVES POWER. “. . .power when the Holy Spirit. . .” [Acts 1:8](#).
9. BRINGS LIBERTY. “. . .the Spirit. . .is liberty” [2 Cor. 3:17](#).
10. TRANSFORMS US. “transformed. . .from the Spirit” [2 Cor. 3:18](#).
11. INTERCEDES FOR US. “. . .the Spirit intercedes for us” [Rom. 8:26](#).
12. BRINGS FRUIT. “. . .But the fruit of the Spirit is. . .” [Gal. 5:22](#).

## Sins Against the Holy Spirit

1. LYING— “. . .you have lied to the Holy Spirit. . .” [Acts 5:3](#).
2. TESTING— “agreed to test the Spirit of the Lord?” [Acts 5:9](#).
3. GRIEVING— “. . .do not grieve the Holy Spirit” [Eph. 4:30](#).
4. BLASPHEMING— “. . .but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven” [Mt. 12:31](#).
5. QUENCHING— “Do not put out the Spirit” [1 Thess. 5:19](#).
6. RESISTING— “You. . .always resist the Holy Spirit” [Acts. 7:51](#).
7. INSULTING— “. . .has insulted the Spirit of grace” [Heb. 10:29](#).

## Something to Think About

A.W. Tozer was once asked– “What will happen to the Church if the Holy Spirit is withdrawn?” He replied, “Nothing will happen to the Church. . .as the Church does not depend upon the Holy Spirit . . .!” Are we living in such a tragedy? Then we are rebellious children. Let’s weep over. [Is. 30:1](#)

## Spiritual Gifts

Lastly, every person who has been born again receives a spiritual gift from the Holy Spirit. Paul writes: “Now there are different gifts, but the same Spirit. . . . To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the benefit of all” ([1 Cor 12:4, 7](#)). This leads us to the very large topic of spiritual gifts and their use in the life of a believer. In some cases unfortunately this is a topic comes with a lot of questions and even controversy. Lists of spiritual gifts occur in [Romans 12](#); [1 Corinthians 12](#) and [Ephesians 4](#). The gifts are listed in the order in which they are given.

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity. He is not a power or force but a Person. In the O.T. the Holy Spirit was given to particular individuals for special tasks. But in the N.T. every believer is given. Let us study this great Person of Godhead, shall we?