

# Holy Spirit and You

## Advance in Faith 1 — Unit 3 Week 1 — Encountering Holy Spirit



## Series introduction

Holy Spirit is our constant companion. We are never alone: 24 x 7 we live in his presence, under his guidance and care. He encourages us when we are struggling. He uplifts us when we are pushed down. He challenges us when we get off track. He helps when we don't know how to pray. He gives us insight when we don't understand people. He acts out God's love through us. He energises us to care as Jesus cares and to work cooperatively with other believers. He shows us what Father is doing, and tells us what Father is saying. He draws us into partnership with God!

Holy Spirit lives in our brothers and sisters as well, binding us together as family under one Father. He regenerates us, breathing Jesus' life into us. He unites us with other believers so we operate as Jesus' body in the world. That's what Holy Spirit does: he expresses Jesus' life in us, so our lives are ablaze with Father's glory.

Over the next 6 weeks, we're on a journey together to appreciate who Holy Spirit is, and what he is doing in us and through us:

Week	Topic
1	<b>Encountering Holy Spirit</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Who is Holy Spirit?</li> <li>b) How do we encounter Holy Spirit?</li> <li>c) Holy Spirit in OT times</li> <li>d) Holy Spirit in NT times</li> </ul>
2	<b>Jesus and Holy Spirit</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Jesus promised Holy Spirit (John 14–16)</li> <li>b) Jesus poured out Holy Spirit (Acts 1–2)</li> </ul>
3	<b>Life with Holy Spirit</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Alive in the Spirit (Galatians 5)</li> <li>b) Living in the Spirit (Romans 8)</li> </ul>
4	<b>Holy Spirit's gifts (1 Corinthians 12–14): part 1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Word of knowledge</li> <li>b) Word of wisdom</li> <li>c) Faith</li> <li>d) Healing</li> <li>e) Miracles</li> </ul>
5	<b>Holy Spirit's gifts (1 Corinthians 12–14): part 2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Prophecy</li> <li>b) Distinguishing spirits</li> <li>c) Different tongues</li> <li>d) Interpretation of tongues</li> </ul>
6	<b>Living in union with Holy Spirit</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Relationship between Father and Son</li> <li>b) Relationship between Son and Holy Spirit</li> <li>c) Joining the dance</li> </ul>

## Who is Holy Spirit?

*Holy Spirit* is a person. Christians believe there is only one God, and he exists in three persons (Father, Son, and Spirit). *Holy Spirit* is therefore somebody's name, not a description of an impersonal force. The way we use language is important. Don't use "it" when referring to the Spirit. You wouldn't speak of your spouse or best friend as it!

In English, when we talk about a person, we don't use "the" before the name. It would be really odd to say, "The Tim preached on Sunday" or "The Sheryl gave me tonight's notes." We use "the" with titles (e.g. "the boss", "the old man"), but not with people's names.

Other languages are different. The New Testament was translated from Greek, and the Greeks did use the definite article before a name. If we translated the text of Matthew 3 literally, it would read like this:

**Matt 3:13-16** *The Jesus* arrived from the Galilee at the Jordan for *the John* to baptise him. *The John* blocked him: "I need you to baptise me." *The Jesus* replied, "Let it be so for now ..." When *the Jesus* was baptised, he came up ...

That's bad English, so translators omit the "the" before a person's name. Except—they fail to do that with Holy Spirit's name!

**Acts 1:8** You will receive power when ~~the~~ Holy Spirit comes upon you.

**Acts 2:38** Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of ~~the~~ Holy Spirit.

In these sessions, we will often speak of "Holy Spirit" (rather than "the Holy Spirit") to remind us that this is the name of a person, not an impersonal title or description.

## How do we encounter Holy Spirit?

The first place you are likely to encounter Holy Spirit is **in other believers**. From the very beginning, God intended that he be known through people. That's what it means to say that we image God to each other and to the rest of creation (Genesis 1:26-28). Even when humans rebelled and lost direct access to his presence (Genesis 3:24), our heavenly ruler still planned to make himself known through the people called to represent him—the Abrahamic family. The ultimate expression of God came through the human named Jesus. He was the "exact representation of God's being" (Hebrews 1:3). Holy Spirit is now forming that picture of God in us. The perfect image of God, found in Jesus, is being formed in us (corporately). Christ-in-you (plural)—that's the hope of God's glorious reign in the world (Colossians 1:27). This may be a scary thought, but people encounter God's Holy Spirit when they encounter us!

Some of those who encountered God wrote about their experience. Some of those writings were recognised by God's people as inspired by Holy Spirit. The Jewish people recognise 39 such books—what we call the Old Testament (OT). In the first few centuries after Jesus, the Christian community recognised another 27 books as Holy Spirit inspired—the New Testament (NT). These 66 books provide the framework for understanding life on earth. In this narrative, Jesus is the central figure who restores God's reign in the world. We encounter Holy Spirit as we immerse ourselves in and understand our own story through the inspired framework he has provided.

## Holy Spirit in Old Testament times

People had only a limited experience of Holy Spirit in OT times. When humans rebelled against our sovereign ruler, we lost access to his holy presence (Genesis 3:24). Nevertheless, God came to rescue his people from oppression by Pharaoh. He was present among them in a pillar of cloud and fire (Exodus 13:21-22). Looking back, we can understand this as a visible representation of God's Holy Spirit.

But people in Old Testament times did not have Holy Spirit in the way we do. They encountered God in his house (Psalms 42:4; 122:1). God lived there in the Most Holy Place, but the people in general did not have God's Spirit.

A few individuals had God's Spirit:

- **craftsmen** empowered to build God's house (Exodus 31:1-5),
- **leaders:** elders (Numbers 11:25-29), Joshua (Numbers 27:18), and the judges (Judges 3:10; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6),
- **kings:** Saul (1 Samuel 10:6, 10; 11:6), David (16:13-14).
- **priests** (2 Chronicles 20:14; 24:20).
- **prophets** (Numbers 11:25-26; 1 Samuel 10:6, 10; 19:20-23; 2 Samuel 23:2; 2 Chronicles 18:23; 24:20; Nehemiah 9:20, 30; Isaiah – Malachi).

The prophets spoke by God's Holy Spirit. They **perceived** what Holy Spirit revealed, and **declared** it. The revelation could be auditory (the *word* of the Lord) or visual (a *dream* or *vision*). Prophecy is not predicting the future: it is declaring what God revealed—speaking by revelation.

For example, when Jesus was arrested:

**Luke 22:64** They blindfolded him and demanded, "Prophesy! Who hit you?"

In that sense, the whole OT was prophecy—speaking by revelation:

- Moses was a prophet (Numbers 12:6-8). He heard God’s plan to release his people from Egypt, and announced it to Israel and to Pharaoh. He heard the laws God gave for his nation, and he recorded them. The **Torah** (Genesis – Deuteronomy) is prophetic revelation.
- We think of Joshua – 2 Kings as books of history, but Israel called them “**the former prophets.**” These books describe people who heard from God and implemented what God said, e.g. Joshua, the judges, David, Elijah, Elisha, ...
- Isaiah – Malachi we recognise as prophets. Israel called them “**the latter prophets.**”
- The other **writings** (Psalms, wisdom books, return-from-exile accounts) are also prophetic. For example, when David writes a psalm, he says, “The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me” (2 Samuel 23:2).

All the Old Testament Scriptures were prophetically inspired by Holy Spirit. He revealed God to people; they reported and recorded what Holy Spirit said. That’s how we should understand Scripture—as a partnership between Holy Spirit (the revealer) and humans (the proclaimers):

**2 Peter 1:21** Prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

## Holy Spirit in New Testament times

When someone claimed divine authority for their message but was not a true prophet, this presented a major problem in OT times. The people in general did not have Holy Spirit, so they did not have the capacity to discern whether this was a true prophet. That’s why God was so harsh against those who presumed to speak in his name:

**Deuteronomy 18:20** A prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, is to be put to death.

That’s so different from the New Testament community where we all have the Spirit, and so we can (and should) evaluate prophetic words:

**1 Thessalonians 5:19-22** Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil.

The Old Testament community could only dream of the kind of life-in-the-Spirit that we all know:

**Numbers 11:29** Moses replied, "... I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!"

**Joel 2:28–29** Afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

Do you see how radical that was? Everyone: young and old, male and female, slave and free—all God's people receive God's Holy Spirit!

That's how John the Baptist describes Jesus' ministry. Jesus would redefine how God related to his people. Previously they had to come to God's house in order to meet with God, but Jesus will flood them all with God's Holy Spirit:

**Luke 3:16** John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

*Baptism with Holy Spirit* has been understood in various ways in the last 200 years.

- The holiness movement understood it as a personal experience of holiness.<sup>1</sup>
- The Pentecostal movement understood it as an individual's experience of the gift of tongues.<sup>2</sup>
- Others think it must be a synonym for personal salvation (since it contrasts the New and the Old).<sup>3</sup>

But all these interpretations treat baptism with Holy Spirit as the experience of an individual. That's so characteristic of our Western culture. It's not what John meant when he used this phrase as a metaphor for Jesus' ministry. Every time the New Testament mentions *baptism with Holy Spirit*, it is contrasting the ministry of John the Baptist and the ministry of Jesus.<sup>4</sup> John's point was that Jesus would introduce a new era when all God's people would be flooded with the Holy Spirit in ways the Old Testament saints never knew.

<sup>1</sup> Torrey, R. A. *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*. New York; Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1895.

<sup>2</sup> G P Duffield & N M Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*. Los Angeles, CA: LIFE Bible College, 1983, 304–325.

<sup>3</sup> R. C. Sproul, *What Is Baptism?* Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2011, 45.

<sup>4</sup> The possible exception is 1 Corinthians 12:13 where careful interpretation is needed.

And that is precisely what Jesus did, following his death, resurrection, and ascension. He poured out God's Holy Spirit on all people, not just on a few prophets, priests and kings. The phrase *Baptism with Holy Spirit* refers not to an individual's experience, but to the radical transformation Jesus introduced when he became king. It is not an individual's experience of holiness or tongues or salvation. It is the moment in history when the anointed king (Christ) ascended heaven's throne and gave his anointing to *all* his people.

Because Jesus already poured out his anointing on humanity, we experience Holy Spirit's work today:

- Holy Spirit regenerates people (saves them).
- Holy Spirit sanctifies people (makes them holy).
- Holy Spirit empowers people (gives them gifts).

These are all the work of the Spirit as we grow in Christ. But it would not be right to ask people to seek a second blessing labelled as "baptism in the Spirit."

## Conclusion

So what have we learned tonight?

Holy Spirit is a person.

We encounter him in:

- a) the community of believers, and
- b) the prophetic revelation he gave in Scripture.

In the Old Testament, few people had Holy Spirit's anointing. But the resurrected and enthroned Jesus has flooded the whole community with Holy Spirit's presence and power.

So, we listen to Holy Spirit, and we partner with him as he declares the world to be the domain of King Jesus our Ruler, and enacts the authority of Jesus in our everyday life.

## Memory Work

### Luke 11:13 (NIV)

If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!

## Group Questions

- 1) Think about what it would have been like for people in Old Testament times, when only a few leaders had Holy Spirit with them. How would their experience have been different to ours?
- 2) What does the term *Baptism with the Holy Spirit* mean to you? Does it refer to an individual's experience of salvation, holiness, or tongues? Or is it a more general term highlighting the way Jesus has now poured out the Holy Spirit on everyone in contrast to Old Testament times?
- 3) How do we encounter Holy Spirit? Discuss how this works out in several settings: your personal life, your reading of Scripture, your fellowship with other believers, and your interactions with the wider world.

## Take Home Exercise

Develop your conversation with Holy Spirit.

Most Christians recognise that Holy Spirit is a person, part of the triune God, along with the Father and the Son. But do you talk with him, as you talk to our Father and to Jesus?

Thank him for his presence with us, everywhere we go. Thank him for regenerating you, placing Jesus' life in you. Thank him for revealing Father's heart for you, a child of our Father. Thank him for his work in the world, convincing people that they need to submit to Jesus' authority and Father's care.

As you talk with Holy Spirit, you will find that he develops in you a deep appreciation for the other members of the trinity. He will fill you with gratitude for Jesus and all that he has done. He will fill you with the love of the Father, the wonder of belonging as his child.

Ask Holy Spirit what's on his heart. He will give you awareness of people around you who are doing it tough. Listen to him; take on board the love he has for them. Trust him with the things that have been burdening you, and let the things that burden him direct your steps. You're praying in the Spirit.

In the words of **Jude 20-21** (The Message):

But you, dear friends, carefully build yourselves up in this most holy faith by **praying in the Holy Spirit**, staying right at the centre of God's love, keeping your arms open and outstretched, ready for the mercy of our Master, Jesus Christ. This is the unending life, the *real* life!

For further reading:

- Scot McKnight, *Open to the Spirit: God in Us, God with Us, God Transforming Us* (WaterBrook, 2018).