

The Holy Spirit

From the website:

We believe that the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) draws, calls, comforts, teaches, leads, indwells and empowers all believers ([Acts 9:31](#); [1 John 2:27](#); [John 16:13](#); [1 Corinthians 3:16](#); [2 Timothy 1:7](#)).

What is the holy spirit?

Traditionally understood as the third person of the Godhead, the same divine essence as the Father and the Son

How can God be plural?

Consider the compound unity described in Gen 2:24 (two people become one flesh)

What is the evidence for this plurality?

- Consider "Let us go down..." Gen 11:7

- Types: Abraham-Isaac-Eliezer = Father-Son-Holy Spirit

Abraham sends his servant (Eliezer [= God of Help] Gen 15:2) to find a bride for his son Isaac and brings Rebekah back to the tabernacle of Sarah where they are married (Gen 24)

- "Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there *am* I: and now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me." Isaiah 48:16

- Acts 7:55,59-60 Stephen filled with the holy spirit sees the glory of God in heaven and Jesus standing at the right hand of God as he calls to Jesus to receive his spirit and not lay this sin to their charge

Is the Holy Spirit personal?

Yeshua says:

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" John 15:26 (NB - "Paraclete" is masculine)

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." John 16:13

The will of the spirit is contrary to the flesh

The flesh wars against the spirit Gen 6:3, Gal 4:29; 5:17

Consider: We pray in the spirit to the father through the son

Common Heresies

Common heresies about the Holy Spirit primarily revolve around denying His full divinity, personhood, or distinct role within the Trinity. These errors have appeared throughout church history and continue in various forms today. Orthodox Christianity (as defined in the Nicene Creed and early councils) affirms the Holy Spirit as the third Person of the Trinity: fully God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son, possessing intellect, will, and emotions, and proceeding from the Father (and sent by the Son).

Here are the most significant historical and contemporary heresies:

1. Pneumatomachianism (Macedonianism) – "Spirit Fighters"

- What it teaches: The Holy Spirit is a created being or subordinate force/servant of the Father and Son, not fully divine or of the same essence (homoousios).
- Origin: 4th century, associated with Macedonius of Constantinople (a semi-Arian). It emerged after Arianism was largely defeated, shifting the attack to the Spirit.

- Condemnation: Officially rejected at the First Council of Constantinople (381 AD), which expanded the Nicene Creed to affirm the Spirit's deity: "who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified."
- Modern echoes: Views that treat the Spirit as an impersonal "energy" or lesser being.

2. Modalism (Sabellianism or Oneness Theology)

- What it teaches: God is one Person who manifests in three different "modes" or roles (Father in creation, Son in redemption, Holy Spirit in sanctification). The Holy Spirit is not a distinct Person but another expression of the same God.
- Origin: Early church (Sabellius, 3rd century); revived in Oneness Pentecostalism (also called "Jesus Only" or Apostolic churches).
- Why heretical: It destroys the eternal personal relationships within the Trinity (e.g., the Son praying to the Father, the Spirit interceding). Oneness groups often baptize "in the name of Jesus" only, rejecting the Trinitarian formula in Matthew 28:19.
- Prevalence: Significant in some Pentecostal circles today.

3. Treating the Holy Spirit as an Impersonal Force

- What it teaches: The Spirit is God's "active force," power, or energy (like electricity or wind), not a personal divine Being.
- Main proponent today: Jehovah's Witnesses. They deny the Spirit's personhood and deity, viewing Him/it as Jehovah's impersonal power in action.
- Biblical problems: Scripture attributes personal actions to the Spirit—he teaches (John 14:26), grieves (Ephesians 4:30), speaks (Acts 13:2), can be lied to (Acts 5:3-4), and possesses will and mind.

4. Other Related or Historical Errors

- Subordinationism: The Spirit is divine but eternally inferior to the Father and Son (a lesser God). This overlaps with Arian-like views.
- Partialism: The Father, Son, and Spirit are "parts" that together make up one God (like three pieces of a pie). This denies each Person is fully God.
- Tritheism: The three Persons are three separate gods (extreme opposite error).
- Montanism (2nd century): Over-emphasis on new prophetic revelations and ecstatic experiences through the Spirit, claiming the "Age of the Spirit" superseded the apostles. It elevated subjective experience over Scripture.
- Binitarianism: Only two Persons in the Godhead (Father and Son), diminishing or denying the Spirit's full personhood.

Why These Matter

Heresies about the Holy Spirit undermine core doctrines:

- The Trinity (one God in three Persons).
- Salvation (the Spirit regenerates, indwells, and sanctifies believers).
- Worship (the Spirit is to be worshiped as God, not a force or mode).

The early church fought these battles to preserve the biblical witness that the Holy Spirit is fully God who dwells in believers, empowers the church, and glorifies Christ (John 16:13-14).

Q: What are some key Old Testament references to the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit (often called the "Spirit of God" or "Spirit of the Lord") appears throughout the Old Testament, though the permanent indwelling seen in the New Testament is not the norm—His presence was often selective and temporary for specific tasks. Key references include:

- Genesis 1:2 — The Spirit of God hovered over the waters at creation.
- Genesis 2:7 — God breathes the "breath of life" (same Hebrew word *ruach* as spirit) into Adam.
- Genesis 6:3 — The Spirit strives with sinful humanity.
- Exodus 31:3 — The Spirit fills Bezalel with wisdom and skill for tabernacle work.
- Numbers 27:18 — The Spirit is upon Joshua.
- Judges 3:10, 6:34, 13:25; 14:6 — The Spirit comes upon judges like Othniel, Gideon, and Samson for deliverance.
- 1 Samuel 10:10; 16:13-14 — The Spirit comes upon Saul (then departs due to disobedience) and David.
- Psalm 51:11 — David prays not to have the Holy Spirit taken from him.
- Psalm 104:29-30 — The Spirit gives and sustains life.
- Isaiah 61:1 — The Spirit anoints for proclamation (quoted by Jesus in Luke 4).
- Ezekiel 36:26-27 — Promise of a new heart and God's Spirit within people.
- Joel 2:28-29 — Prophecy of the Spirit poured out on all people (fulfilled at Pentecost).

The Spirit empowered creation, leaders, prophets, and artisans, and inspired Scripture.

Q: What metaphors does Scripture use for the Holy Spirit?

The Bible uses several vivid metaphors to describe the invisible Holy Spirit's nature and work:

- Wind/Breath — Invisible yet powerful, unpredictable, life-giving (Genesis 1:2; John 3:8; Ezekiel 37).
- Dove — Gentleness, peace, purity (seen at Jesus' baptism, Matthew 3:16; also Noah's ark).
- Fire — Purifying, empowering, illuminating (Acts 2:3; burning bush in Exodus 3).
- Oil — Anointing for service, healing, joy, and consecration (used in OT anointing of kings/priests; 1 Samuel 16:13).
- Water/Living Water — Refreshing, cleansing, life-sustaining, flowing (John 7:38-39; Ezekiel 47).
- Cloud — God's guiding presence (as in the wilderness).
- Seal/Guarantee — Ownership, security, and down payment on inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14).

These images highlight the Spirit's dynamic, personal, and transformative presence.

Q: What are the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and how do they differ from the fruit of the Holy Spirit?

Gifts (primarily 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28; Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 4:11) are special abilities or empowerments given by the Holy Spirit for the common good, building up the church, and service. They are diverse, distributed as the Spirit wills, and focus on what you do. Examples include:

- Wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues, interpretation of tongues.
- Also: apostleship, teaching, helping, administration, mercy, evangelism, pastoring.
- Fruit (Galatians 5:22-23) describes the character transformation produced in a believer's life by the Holy Spirit. It is singular ("fruit") but lists nine qualities that reflect Christ's likeness and focus on who you are becoming. They grow over time through yielding to the Spirit:

- Love, joy, peace, patience (forbearance), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Key distinction: Gifts are abilities for ministry (can be exercised even if character is immature); fruit evidences spiritual maturity and a Spirit-led life. Both come from the Holy Spirit, but fruit is the evidence of a transformed heart.

Q: What are the key points from Jesus' speech to the disciples about the Holy Spirit (mainly John 14–16)?

In the Upper Room Discourse (John 14–16), just before His arrest, Jesus comforts His troubled disciples by promising the Holy Spirit as "another Helper" (Paraclete —Counselor, Advocate, Comforter) who would continue His ministry.

Key points :

- The Father will send the Spirit in Jesus' name at Jesus' request (John 14:16, 26).
- The Spirit is the Spirit of truth, who dwells with and will be in believers permanently (unlike the temporary OT experience). The world cannot receive Him (John 14:17).
- He will teach all things, remind the disciples of Jesus' words, and guide into all truth (John 14:26; 16:13).
- He will testify about Jesus and empower the disciples to do the same (John 15:26-27).
- He will convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11).
- He will glorify Jesus by taking what is Jesus' and declaring it (John 16:14-15).
- It is to the disciples' advantage that Jesus goes away, so the Spirit can come (John 16:7).
- The Spirit will bring peace amid trouble and persecution (John 14:27; 16:33).

Jesus portrays the Spirit as personal (He, not "it"), continuing Jesus' presence and work, enabling the church's mission. This promise is fulfilled at Pentecost (Acts 2).