

BASIC THEOLOGY: PNEUMATOLOGY

The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

Main Point

The Holy Spirit is God with us and in us. He gives new life, makes believers more like Christ, gives gifts for serving the church, and creates a growing desire for the things of God.

Scripture

- Opening: Who Is the Holy Spirit? — **John 14:16-17, 26**
- The Spirit in the Old Testament — **1 Samuel 16:13-14**
- The Spirit in Every Christian — **John 14:16-17**
- He Gives Life, Truth, and Holy Desire — **Romans 8:5-9**
- He Produces the Fruit of Christlike Character — **Galatians 5:16, 22-25**
- He Gives Gifts for the Good of the Church — **1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 11**
- He Empowers Witness, Assurance, and Prayer — **Romans 8:14-16, 26-27**
- Walking by the Spirit — **Ephesians 5:18**

1. Opening: Who Is the Holy Spirit? John 14:16-17, 26

Pneumatology is the study of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal power, an emotion, or merely the active part of God. He is the third Person of the Trinity: fully God, eternally one with the Father and the Son, yet personally distinct from them. At Jesus' baptism the Son is in the water, the Spirit descends, and the Father speaks from heaven—three Persons acting together as the one true God (Matthew 3:16-17).

The Bible describes the Spirit doing personal acts. He teaches and reminds Jesus' disciples (John 14:26). He guides into truth and glorifies Christ (John 16:13-14). He intercedes for believers (Romans 8:26-27). A force does not teach, guide, glorify, or pray. The Spirit is a divine Person who knows, wills, loves, speaks, and works.

The Bible's Pictures of the Spirit

Scripture uses visible pictures to help us understand aspects of the invisible Spirit's work. These symbols describe Him; they do not define His nature.

- **Wind:** Jesus compares the Spirit's life-giving work to wind—real and powerful even though unseen (John 3:5-8).
- **Fire:** At Pentecost, tongues like fire marked God's presence and the Spirit's empowering work (Acts 2:1-4).
- **Dove:** At Jesus' baptism, the Spirit descended like a dove, publicly identifying and anointing the Son for His mission (Matthew 3:16-17).

Whole-Group Discussion: What do wind, fire, and the dove help us see about the Spirit's work? What would go wrong if we treated any symbol as a complete picture of who He is?

2. The Spirit in the Old Testament 1 Samuel 16:13-14

The Holy Spirit did not begin working at Pentecost. He was present at creation (Genesis 1:2). He spoke through the prophets (2 Peter 1:21). No sinner in any age has ever trusted and loved

God apart from the Spirit's gracious work. Old Testament believers were saved by grace through faith in God's promise, and the Spirit was active in giving spiritual life.

Yet the Old Testament often highlights the Spirit coming upon particular people for particular acts of service. "The Spirit of the LORD rushed upon" Samson and empowered him (Judges 14:6). The Spirit came powerfully upon David when he was anointed king, while departing from Saul as God removed Saul's royal empowerment (1 Samuel 16:13-14). David therefore prayed, "Take not your Holy Spirit from me" (Psalm 51:11). In context, David feared losing the kingly anointing as Saul had; this is not a pattern teaching that a new-covenant believer repeatedly loses and regains the Spirit.

The Promised Change

The prophets looked forward to a new-covenant outpouring. God promised to give His people a new heart, put His Spirit within them, and move them to walk in His ways (Ezekiel 36:26-27). Joel promised that God would pour out His Spirit broadly upon sons and daughters, young and old, male and female servants (Joel 2:28-29). The gift would no longer be pictured chiefly as selective empowerment for a few leaders. God would dwell within all His covenant people.

3. The Spirit in Every Christian John 14:16-17

Jesus promised "another Helper" who would be with His disciples forever. The Spirit had been with them and would be in them (John 14:16-17). After Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension, Pentecost marked the public arrival of this promised new-covenant gift. Peter identified the event with Joel's promise (Acts 2:16-18). The same Spirit now unites every believer to Christ and makes every believer His dwelling place.

The New Testament does not divide Christians into ordinary believers and a higher class who possess the Spirit. "Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him" (Romans 8:9). Every person who truly trusts Christ receives the Spirit, is sealed as God's own, and receives Him as the guarantee of the inheritance to come (Ephesians 1:13-14). The believer's body is therefore a temple of the Holy Spirit and belongs to God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Family Discussion: *For younger children:* Where does the Holy Spirit live when a person belongs to Jesus? Why is that good news?

For older children and adults: How is the Spirit's new-covenant indwelling different from the Old Testament examples of special empowerment?

4. He Gives Life, Truth, and Holy Desire Romans 8:5-9

The Christian life begins and continues by the Spirit. Jesus taught that entrance into God's kingdom requires being born of the Spirit (John 3:5-8). The Spirit also convicts the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:7-8). He opens blind hearts to the truth and enables believers to understand the gracious things of God (1 Corinthians 2:12). The Spirit who inspired Scripture works through that Scripture to teach, correct, and train God's people (2 Timothy 3:16).

The Spirit also changes what a believer wants. The mind controlled by the flesh is hostile to God, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit (Romans 8:5-8). God works in His people "both to will and to work for his good pleasure"

(Philippians 2:13). A Christian still battles sinful desires, but a new desire has appeared: to know God, please Christ, understand His Word, worship, pray, repent, love His people, and obey. This new desire may be weak, opposed, or inconsistent, but its presence matters. Conviction over sin is not proof that the Spirit has abandoned us; often it is evidence that He is exposing what once did not trouble us. Spiritual growth is not measured by never struggling. It is seen as the Spirit repeatedly turns us toward Christ in faith, repentance, and obedience.

5. He Produces the Fruit of Christlike Character Galatians 5:16, 22-25

Believers are commanded to walk by the Spirit rather than gratify the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). The “fruit of the Spirit” is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Paul calls it fruit, singular: one Spirit grows a whole Christlike character in His people. We should not excuse lovelessness because we are patient, or excuse a lack of self-control because we are kind. Fruit grows; it is not manufactured instantly. The Spirit produces it as believers belong to Christ, put sinful desires to death, keep in step with Him, receive His Word, pray, worship, and live in Christian community (Galatians 5:24-25). These practices do not replace the Spirit’s power. They are ordinary ways He works in us. We act because He is at work, and we depend on Him because our effort alone cannot make us holy.

Whole-Group Discussion

- Which fruit of the Spirit is easiest to notice in another person? Which one is hardest to practice when life is difficult?
- How is spiritual fruit different from simply having a pleasant personality?
- Why can conviction of sin be an encouraging sign of the Spirit’s work rather than a reason to hide from God?

Family Discussion

- Choose one fruit from **Galatians 5:22-23**. What would that fruit look like in your home this week?
- Name one “thing of God” you want the Spirit to help your family desire more—Scripture, prayer, worship, obedience, generosity, service, or something else. What is one concrete step you can take together?

6. He Gives Gifts for the Good of the Church 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 11

The same Spirit who produces character also equips service. There are different gifts and different kinds of service, but the same triune God works through them. “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). Gifts are Spirit-enabled capacities for building up others, not trophies proving that one Christian is more spiritual than another.

The Spirit distributes gifts according to His own will (1 Corinthians 12:11). Therefore, no believer should be proud of a gift, ashamed of lacking another person’s gift, or content to remain uninvolved. Christ gives leaders to equip the saints so that the whole body serves and grows toward maturity (Ephesians 4:11-13). Children and adults alike can begin discovering gifts through faithful service, biblical affirmation, growing ability, and the needs of the church. A spiritual gift is not a substitute for spiritual fruit. A gifted teacher without gentleness, a generous giver without love, or an energetic servant without self-control is not displaying

maturity. Gifts describe ways the Spirit works through us; fruit describes the kind of people He is making us. The church needs both Spirit-given service and Spirit-produced character.

He Empowers Witness, Assurance, and Prayer Romans 8:14-16, 26-27

- **Witness:** The Spirit gives power to testify about Jesus (Acts 1:8).
- **Assurance:** The Spirit leads God's children and bears witness that they belong to the Father (Romans 8:14-16).
- **Prayer:** The Spirit helps believers in weakness and intercedes according to God's will (Romans 8:26-27).

7. Walking by the Spirit Ephesians 5:18

Because the Spirit lives in us, Christians are commanded to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). This does not mean receiving a different Spirit or gaining more of His Person. It means living continually under His influence and control. Walking by the Spirit is active dependence: trusting Christ, submitting to Scripture, confessing sin, praying for help, obeying what God has revealed, serving with our gifts, and staying close to Christ's church.

We should not chase spectacular experiences while neglecting the Spirit's ordinary work. His great purpose is to glorify Christ (John 16:14). A Spirit-filled life will therefore make Jesus precious, sin hateful, Scripture welcomed, prayer natural, holiness desirable, love visible, service joyful, and witness courageous.

Final Family Discussion

- What is one ability, interest, or opportunity God may use to help you serve someone in the church?
- Where do you most need the Spirit's help this week: holy desire, spiritual fruit, service, witness, assurance, or prayer?

Conclusion

The Holy Spirit is not an optional addition to the Christian life. He gives new birth, dwells in every believer, seals us for the day of redemption, helps us understand God's truth, creates holy desires, produces Christlike fruit, gives gifts for service, empowers witness, assures us of adoption, and helps us pray. We do not merely need to know facts about Him. We need to walk by Him, depend on Him, and thank God that through the Spirit He is truly with us and in us.