

STUDY I - WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Andrea recently became a follower of Christ, but lately he's been having a hard time in his relationship with God. He feels grateful that God has forgiven his sins and wants to keep growing spiritually, but he feels like he's hit a wall. Does he have what it takes to be the kind, loving, unselfish person he knows God wants him to be? He's not so sure. Have you ever felt like Andrea does?

INTRO

Who is the Holy Spirit? Is he a *who*? Is he a *ghost*? When Jesus left the earth, he said that he had to leave so that the Holy Spirit could come (John 16:7). Why is this Holy Spirit so important? The Bible says the Holy Spirit is the power source to our spiritual life. It's like the electricity to a light bulb. Without electricity, the light bulb is still a light bulb, but it is powerless and useless. In the same way, without the Holy Spirit guiding their lives, Christians will have no power to live the kind of life God calls them to live. They will feel defeated and always kind of stuck. In this series we will learn who the Holy Spirit is and how He helps us live the Christian life. Let's first take a look at what the Bible says about the Holy Spirit.

WHAT DOES GOD SAY?

The Holy Spirit is a person, specifically the third person of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is not a vague, ethereal shadow, nor an impersonal force. He is a person equal in every way with the Father and the Son. All the divine attributes ascribed to the Father and the Son are equally ascribed to the Holy Spirit.

Read John 14:15-17 & 25-26. Why did the Holy Spirit come?

Read John 16:7-11. What did Jesus say about the Holy Spirit?

Let's discover who the Holy Spirit is in more detail. For each category below read the verses and write down what they say about the Holy Spirit.

1. Nature:
 - a. John 16:13
 - b. Romans 8:2

2. Function:
 - a. I Corinthians 3:16
 - b. Acts 1:8

3. Actions:
 - a. Romans 8:26
 - b. II Thessalonians 2:13

4. Attributes:
 - a. Genesis 1:1-2
 - b. Psalm 139:7
 - c. I Corinthians 2:10-11

HOW DO WE APPLY THIS TO OUR LIVES?

1. How would you describe the Holy Spirit to a Christian friend? To a non-Christian?
2. After doing today's study, what has changed in how you think about the Holy Spirit?

PRAYER

Spend a moment in prayer thanking God for some way He is working in your life and ask Him to help you apply one thing you have learned from the study this week.

The Holy Spirit was first introduced to us in Genesis and guides and accomplishes the work of God throughout the scriptures, ultimately being sent to fill and empower Christians after Pentecost. In the next study we will look at how the Holy Spirit helps Christians live their lives for God.

STUDY 2 - WHAT DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT DO?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Sara comes from a Christian family and has believed in Jesus for as long as she can remember. She loves God and participates in every activity of her local church. She listens to every sermon and studies her Bible on her own, but lately she has been feeling discouraged and guilty because she can't seem to live the "perfect" life that is expected of her. She tries hard to stop sinning and feels shame when she messes up. In what ways can you relate to Sara? If Sara came to you for advice, what would you tell her?

INTRO

In the last study we learned who the Holy Spirit is and why He came. But what does the Holy Spirit do for Christians today? The Bible teaches us how to live lives pleasing to God, but if we try to do so in our own strength we inevitably feel frustrated and guilty for not measuring up to God's standards. God knows this and gave us the Holy Spirit to help us. The Holy Spirit is the power source for the Christian. The moment you receive Christ, you are regenerated, indwelt, sealed, baptized, and filled with the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5, 1 Cor. 3:16, Eph. 1:13-14, 1 Cor. 12:13, Eph. 5:18). As a result, you have the potential to live a life of victory over sin and be a testimony of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Let's take a look at what the Bible says about how the Holy Spirit enables the Christian to live for Him.

WHAT DOES GOD SAY?

Read Romans 8:1-16. List out all of the things the Holy Spirit does for the believer.

Read Galatians 3:1-9. How are our own fleshly or human efforts viewed in this passage?

Read Galatians 5:16-26. Make two columns. On the right side, write out each fruit of the Spirit. On the left side, write the opposite of each fruit. When we are living by our own strength, we will see many of these negative fruits in our lives. When you notice one of these negative fruits showing up in your life, repent of it - confess it to God, ask for His forgiveness, trust that He forgives you and invite the Holy Spirit to fill you and produce the opposite, positive fruit.

HOW DO WE APPLY THIS TO OUR LIVES?

1. How would you explain the difference between the law of the flesh and the law of the Spirit in Romans 8 to a friend?
2. In what ways do you live according to the law of the flesh? How can you walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh?
3. Which fruits of the Holy Spirit are evident in your life? Which fruits are not as evident in your life and how could you grow in them?

PRAYER

Spend a moment in prayer thanking God for some way He is working in your life and ask Him to help you apply one thing you have learned from the study this week.

When we put our trust in Jesus, God gives us the Holy Spirit to help us live for Him. In the next study we will look at how we can daily be filled with the Holy Spirit.

STUDY 3 - HOW TO BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Federico has been a Christian only for a short amount of time. He used to be really excited about his faith, but lately he doesn't feel much anymore. When he sins he feels so guilty that he doesn't pray for days. And when he finally does he feels distant from God. He's starting to question his faith. Have you ever felt this way? What would you say to Federico to encourage him?

INTRO

Christ's first disciples and followers were ordinary people – they were fishermen and tradesmen. They didn't have large amounts of wealth or status. Then, at Pentecost in Acts 2, something extraordinary happened – they were filled with the Holy Spirit and life was never the same. God used these men to start the early church and change the world, but they could only do it with power from the Holy Spirit.

The moment you put your trust in Christ as Lord you receive the Holy Spirit forever. The same Holy Spirit the disciples received with His life-changing power resides in you. You are dramatically changed; you are a new creation. But you may not always live like that. Tragically, many Christians go through life without ever experiencing the satisfied and fruitful life that Christ promised to all who trust Him. Maybe this describes you.

WHAT DOES GOD SAY?

A key part to a relationship with God is repentance. In the Gospels Jesus challenged people to turn from their sin and follow Him. The act of turning from our sin toward God is called repentance and can be understood through the simple analogy of breathing. We confess our sins to God (exhale), thank Him for his forgiveness, and invite God to fill us with the Holy Spirit (inhale) in order to have His power to turn from our sin.

Read Ephesians 5:15-18. Why do you think Paul relates drunkenness and being filled with the Spirit? The Ephesians to whom Paul was writing already received the Holy Spirit when they became Christians. Paul is not suggesting that they need to receive it again, but rather he commands them to be filled with the Spirit continually instead of being filled with other sinful things. This action of being filled continually by the Spirit is called spiritual breathing.

Spiritual breathing can be done in four steps:

1. EXHALE

Confess your sin the moment you become aware of it and thank Him for His forgiveness (1 John 1:9, Hebrews 10:1-25). This is like breathing out the bad air that could poison you. You can pray something like this: "God, I _____. That was sin. I'm sorry. Thank you for forgiving me."

2. INHALE

Next, ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit according to His command in Ephesians 5:18. You always have the Spirit within you but God wants to fill you with His power everyday. It's just too hard to live for God on your own strength. We all need the Holy Spirit's power to do it. You can pray something like this - "Please give me your power to not sin in that way again. Fill me with your Spirit and help me know that I am forgiven."

3. TRUST

Trust that God has forgiven your sins and is filling you with His Holy Spirit. We are filled with the Spirit by faith, enabling us to experience intimacy with God and enjoy all He has for us. "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him" (1 John 5:14-15).

4. REPEAT

We sin multiple times a day. Practice Spiritual Breathing whenever you recognize that you've sinned.

HOW DO WE APPLY THIS TO OUR LIVES?

1. What do you think would change in your life if you practiced Spiritual Breathing regularly?
2. What is true of you when you are filled with the Holy Spirit?
3. Take time now to do this exercise silently. How do you feel after?

It's important to remember that it is not our feelings but God's Word that is our authority. The Christian lives by faith and trust in God even when his or her feelings don't reflect that. If we are flying in a plane, we need to place our faith in the trustworthiness of the plane and pilot. Our feelings of confidence or fear don't affect the ability of the plane to transport us, but they do affect how much we enjoy the flight. In the same way, we don't depend on feelings or emotions to tell us if we're filled with the Spirit; we place our faith or trust in the trustworthiness of God and the promises of His Word. Whether or not we feel anything, we can be confident that God has forgiven us and is filling us with His Spirit if we ask Him.

PRAYER

Spend a moment in prayer thanking God for some way He is working in your life and ask Him to help you apply one thing you have learned from the study this week.

The Holy Spirit fills us to live radical, powerful lives for God. In the next study we will look at how God uses Spirit-filled people to advance His kingdom on earth.

STUDY 4 - TELLING OTHERS ABOUT JESUS THROUGH THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Giulia and Francesca are classmates and regularly see each other around the city. During a break at their faculty by the coffee machine, Giulia mentioned that she is a Christian. Francesca laughed instinctively but quickly apologized. Since then Giulia has been afraid to talk about her faith with her classmates. Have you ever had an experience like Giulia's? What advice would you give her?

INTRO

All around you are friends and classmates struggling through life to find happiness and purpose. What would it be like if your friends, classmates, professors, and family members all knew Jesus? In Matthew 4:19 Jesus said to His disciples, "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men." One of the primary purposes for which you are filled with the Holy Spirit is to be a witness for Christ through the holy life that you live and the empowered words you speak. God wants to use you to share His life-changing message of salvation with those around you, and He promises to help you through the power of his Holy Spirit.

Consider carefully the last words Jesus told His disciples on the Mount of Olives moments before He ascended into heaven. Jesus had commissioned His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel and to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:16-19). But He had told them not to leave Jerusalem until they were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).

Jesus was suggesting to his disciples that although they had been with him for three years or more, it was not enough that they had heard him teach the multitudes and had seen him heal the sick and even raise the dead. They needed to be empowered with the Holy Spirit in order to be effective and fruitful as his witnesses throughout the world.

WHAT DOES GOD SAY?

Read John 15: 26-27.

- How does this passage describe the Holy Spirit?
- Who will "testify" and what does that mean?

Jesus told his disciples in Acts 1:8 "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." The rest of the book of Acts tells the story of the Holy Spirit empowering the disciples to tell the good news of Jesus and starting the early Church.

Read Acts 4: 1-22

- What can we learn about the Holy Spirit from this story?
- How do the Holy Spirit and Peter testify about Jesus?
- Peter was sharing the message about Jesus in a way that personally related to the leaders of Jerusalem. How would you share about Jesus in a way that personally relates to a classmate or friend?

Sometimes our faith can get us in difficult situations. We may not always know exactly what to say to our friends or professors. Often our fears prevent us from saying anything at all. When you feel afraid, practice Spiritual Breathing - confess your fear to God and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Peter said "As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." The Holy Spirit will help you share with others about what you have seen, heard, and experienced with God.

HOW DO WE APPLY THIS TO OUR LIVES?

- What reason do we have to share the message of Jesus with others?
- What have you "seen and heard" about Jesus that you would want to share with others?
- How do you think differently about the Holy Spirit after these studies? What would you want to communicate to a friend about the Holy Spirit?

PRAYER

Spend a moment in prayer thanking God for some way He is working in your life and ask Him to help you apply one thing you have learned from the study this week.

Jesus said in Luke 10:2 that "the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few." God has given the Holy Spirit to empower us to be witnesses for Christ and join in His mission as laborers for the harvest. God has strategically placed you in your family, faculty, and friend groups to be a testimony for Him. Write out the names of 5 friends below and ask God to give you opportunities this week to talk about your faith with them. Expect God to be at work in their lives and search for how He is answering your prayers.