

Introducing the Holy Spirit

God's Spirit is more than a dove or wind or even power. He is a Person.

Some readers may deem it presumptuous of me to say, "I'd like to present to you the Holy Spirit." Others might think it rather abstract and impractical of me to address the question, Who is the Holy Spirit? To many people the Holy Spirit is nothing more than a name in a religious creed recited in liturgical services, or merely a vague influence mentioned in the Scriptures.

I don't blame anyone for thinking in these ways; I remember the time in my life when I too would have thought it strange to address the Holy Spirit as a person, friend and teacher. Even though when speaking theologically I referred to Him as the third person of the Godhead (which He is), He was not in those days a real person to me.

After serving God as a Methodist professor and pastor for many years, I came into a fuller relationship with the Holy Spirit. I realized He had come to live in my life and was someone whom I was not personally or intimately acquainted with. It was then that my personal testimony became like those of many other Christians: "My life and service to God was entirely transformed by becoming acquainted with the Holy Spirit as a person."

It is unfortunate that even the evangelical church world often calls the Holy Spirit an "it" or describes Him as "tongues" or defines Him as an "emblem" such as a dove or the wind. Some declare Him to be a mere "influence" or "power." He is none of those things!

If we think of the Holy Spirit in such ways, then we'll inevitably rob Him of the honor and worship He is due. We won't relate to Him properly or give Him the love, trust,

surrender and obedience that we should. It's possible to even have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and still not recognize Him as a divine personality.

Yet before we can relate to the Holy Spirit properly, we must accept the truth that He is, in fact, a person.

Who Is He?

People often misunderstand what we are saying when we refer to the Holy Spirit as a "person." They think we're saying He has hands, eyes and ears, and operates in a physical body as we know it. But those physical characteristics are attributes of corporeality, not personality.

When using the word *personality*, we simply refer to the quality or state of being a person. Being a person involves the power of intellect of the mind; the power of volition, or the will; and the power of emotional response. One who thinks, feels and exercises his will is a person.

The Scriptures ascribe to the Holy Spirit all the attributes of personality. For example, knowledge is attributed to the Holy Spirit in the passage that says, "Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:11, NKJV). The Holy Spirit is not just illumination or inspiration. He Himself knows the things of God and reveals them to us.

Volition, or will, is attributed to the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures that teach us concerning the gifts of the Spirit, such as 1 Corinthians 12:11: "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills."

Emotion is also attributed to Him in the apostle Paul's appeal to the Romans for prayer: "Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me"

(15:30).

Notice particularly the phrase, “the love of the Spirit.” It demonstrates that the Holy Spirit isn’t a blind influence or an “it.” He is not tongues or gifts, nor is He just divine power. He is a divine person, living in us and loving us with the most tender love.

When Jesus prepared His disciples for the coming of the Holy Spirit, He taught them many things about the Spirit’s personality. He referred to the Holy Spirit as the “Spirit of truth,” “Counselor” and “Comforter” (see John 14-16; KJV, NIV). The Holy Spirit takes the truth of Christ’s words, reveals their depth of meaning to us and writes the Word of God on the tablets of our hearts until the living Word becomes the Christ-life lived in and through us (see Jer. 31:33; 2 Cor. 3:3). He is the Comforter who comforts us in our earthly sorrows and brings a peace into our hearts that the world cannot give.

It is especially interesting that at Jesus’ baptism, the Holy Spirit was present in the form of a *dove*. The predestined plan and purpose of God for symbolizing the Holy Spirit as a dove was to reveal to us the gentle nature of the Holy Spirit.

He is never harsh, rude, critical or judgmental. He will convict, correct, instruct, teach and lead, always in the patient gentleness of His divine personality. He is God, and God is love (see 1 John 4:8).

Getting to Know Him

After we have accepted the Holy Spirit as a divine person, we can begin to acquaint ourselves with Him. We cannot develop a relationship with Him without cultivating a life of *prayer* and *fellowship* with Him.

Our personal choices affect our fellowship with God just as they do with people. The way we respond to the Holy Spirit

either builds a loving relationship with Him or hinders the development of that relationship. Results of communion with the Holy Spirit include:

Victory. Perhaps you've discovered, as I have, that we aren't smart enough to solve the countless problems we continually face. As we develop a personal communion with the Holy Spirit, we can pray: "Holy Spirit, please lead me and teach me about this problem I'm having. Give me Your answer from the mind of God." He is faithful to show us the way to victory.

Revelation. Much of the time we spend in prayer with God each day should be devoted to quietly meditating on the Word and allowing the Holy Spirit to speak to our hearts. Each time God gives us fresh insight into the Word, He makes the *logos* (the written Word) become a *rhema* (a living Word) to our spirits.

Protection. Through our fellowship with the Holy Spirit, we receive His protection from the enemy. Many times the persecutions that come from the world don't wound us as deeply as the attacks that come from God's people. Our daily communion with the Holy Spirit can shield us from the negative effects of these attacks.

Anointing. By yielding to the Holy Spirit in obedience and faith, He enables us to exercise the gifts of the Spirit (see 1 Tim. 4:14-15). As we fellowship with Him, we gain the understanding of these spiritual gifts.

Motivation. The apostle Paul taught that the proper motivation for exercising the gifts of the Spirit is love—love for God and for one another (see 1 Cor. 13). Fellowship with the Holy Spirit develops in us the way of love, which keeps all spiritual gifts and manifestations in proper order.

Ministry. Growth and development in ministry come through waiting in prayer and fellowshiping with the Holy Spirit. Every Spirit-filled person can minister the life of the Holy Spirit.

Boldness. The Holy Spirit is God's provision to increase our boldness, inspire our obedience and strengthen our faith. Obedience to the way He guides us often requires a courage that only prayerful communion and fellowship with the Holy Spirit can produce.

God has revealed all we need to know about the Holy Spirit in His Word. As we give ourselves to prayerful study of the Scriptures, we can expect to come into a more satisfying relationship with Him.

I would like to shout to the church today: "This blessed Holy Spirit is not an 'it'! He isn't just tongues or gifts. He is the infinite, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal third person of the Godhead. He is a divine person!"

Fuchsia Pickett, who passed away in 2004, was miraculously healed of a genetic, life-threatening disease in 1959, baptized in the Holy Spirit and began to minister the Word of God worldwide. She was a Methodist professor and pastor for many years and the author of a best-selling book, *The Next Move of God*.

Find Scriptures to learn more about the person of the Holy Spirit at *holyspirit*.