

12 Functions of the Holy Spirit in Every Believer

The Holy Spirit is perhaps the most misunderstood member of the triune Godhead. Many believers perceive and or treat Him as though He is nothing more than a force or a presence that emanates from God.

(Reviving an ancient heresy called Pneumatomachian, which is a 4th-century Christian heresy that denied the full personality and divinity of the Holy Spirit.)

Conversely, when referring to the Holy Spirit, Jesus used the personal pronoun “He” (see John 14:16; 16:6,7) in the context of saying the Spirit would take His place after He ascended into heaven (an impersonal force cannot take the place of the Lord Jesus).

It is vital that the body of Christ understand the personality and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The following are some of His ministry functions:

1. He births that which is of God.

As recorded in the Luke narrative of Jesus (1:35) the Holy Spirit came upon Mary the mother of Jesus so she could conceive of the Spirit and give birth to the Messiah. Also, Jesus said that His followers had to be born again of the Spirit in order to see the kingdom (John 3:3-8).

Paul, taking his cue from the Lord Jesus, says that a person is saved when they are regenerated by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5) and in Romans 8:26-27 Paul says that Spirit induces groanings in believers and intercedes for the will of God to come to pass (to be birthed).

2. He tells us things to come (John 16:13).

One of the great blessings of being in fellowship with the Holy Spirit is the fact that He often warns us and or leads us regarding things to come in the future so we are adequately prepared. I have personally experienced many instances, too numerous to recount here, that demonstrate this function of the Spirit—not only for me, but for all believers who yield to the Spirit.

3. He comforts and counsels us (John 14:16).

Jesus, in preparation for His physical absence from His disciples (after His ascension), comforted them by assuring them that He was going to send them another Helper (Comforter, Counselor) who would be inside them forever.

The Spirit is called the Helper because He was going to function in the same way Jesus did when He was walking with His disciples on the earth. Jesus comforted them, counseled and helped them in every endeavor they faced for three and a half years, so He could model the Spirit-filled life they would lead after He departed from them. Also, in the context of being a Comforter, Jesus assured them that the Spirit's coming would fill them with other-worldly peace (See John 14:26-27), which is another role of the Comforter.

4. He leads and guides us (John 16:13).

Jesus assured His followers that, as He led them while walking physically with them on the earth, the Spirit would also lead and guide them. Paul the apostle also later reiterated these words when he said that the Spirit would lead the (mature) sons of God (Rom. 8:14).

5. He empowers and prays through us.

The apostle Jude teaches us that we are built up in our faith when our prayers are yielded to and inspired by the Holy Spirit (Jude 20)—as opposed to the laborious prayers of the mind and soul. The apostle Paul also refers to this kind of

prayer when he admonished the saints to petition and pray at all times in the Spirit (Eph. 6:18).

In my many years of being in prayer gatherings, it is very easy for me to tell when a person is laboring to pray in the flesh or when their prayers flow out of the anointing and power of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps there is nothing more important in the life of the church than to have powerful, Spirit-led prayer meetings that alone can shake and shift the atmosphere (See Acts 4:24-31).

6. He is the great teacher of the church.

Nowadays, we have the greatest tools ever created for Bible study, including effective, insightful commentaries, study Bibles, Bible software and the like. However, by far the greatest gift we have for understanding the Scriptures is through the illumination of the Holy Spirit—who is able to take our acquired skill and knowledge in hermeneutics (biblical interpretation) and endow us with heavenly insight that He bestows as the great magisterium (teacher) of the church.

This is why Jesus called Him “The Spirit of Truth” (John 14:17) and the person who not only teaches us all things but brings His words to our remembrance (14:26). Also, John the apostle said that one of the functions of the Spirit’s Anointing upon the church is to teach us (1 John 2:27). Consequently, we need to have another category in hermeneutics if we are going to be true to the New Testament that of experiential or Holy Spirit Hermeneutics.

7. He convicts believers of sin.

The apostle Paul taught the church that the Holy Spirit is grieved when we sin (Eph. 4:30), which is another way of Him informing us when our behavior is displeasing to the Lord.

8. He convicts the world of sin.

Jesus taught that the Holy Spirit comes to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (See John 16:7-11). Hence, it is not the job of the church to convict people of sin, but to preach the gospel of Christ and allow the Holy Spirit to do His inner work of convicting and bringing people to Christ.

9. He gives us gifts to minister like Jesus.

Paul the apostle wrote an amazing section as recorded in his first epistle to the Corinthians (see Chapter 12) when he enumerates the administration and distribution of the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit. These gifts enable us to walk in the same ministerial power and effectiveness that Jesus had when He was anointed of the Holy Spirit (See Luke 4:18, Acts 10:38).

Cessationists, who deny the Holy Spirit of the fullness of His ministry function, attempt to limit the supernatural to the initial born-again salvation experience that takes place when a person comes to Jesus. However, if Jesus and the apostles needed the fullness and gifts of the Spirit to minister the gospel, who are we to say that His fullness is not necessary to fulfill His mission in this day and age.

10. He empowers us to bear behavioral fruit like Jesus.

It is not only important for the church to walk in the power of Christ related to ministry, but we need to also walk in the power of the Spirit in our behavior and life so we also can walk in love like Jesus. Paul does a masterful job of explaining this in his letter to the Galatian church when he urges us to walk in the Spirit so we will not fulfill the desires of the flesh (see Gal. 5:16-23). Consequently, unless we walk in the fruit of the Spirit, the power of the Spirit for ministry will eventually be rendered ineffective because our character will not be able to sustain our ministerial platform.

11. He develops overseers and sends out leaders.

Even though elders are initially chosen by an apostolic-type leader (See 1 Tim. 3:1-8, Titus 1), Paul said that the Holy Spirit is (ultimately) the one who makes the choice of church place leaders and overseers if it's going to be legitimate (See Acts 20:28).

Furthermore, another significant role of the Spirit is to bear witness to the church eldership when it is time to send leaders out of a local church to conduct extra local ministry and or church planting (See Acts 13:1,2).

12. He testifies of Jesus (John 15:26,16:14-15).

Since the role of the Holy Spirit is to point to Jesus instead of to Himself, He is incredibly humble and not self-seeking. Hence, all Christian leaders and believers who use their God-given gifts and calling to point to themselves lack true spiritual formation, are still immature in spite of their title and position in the church and are carnal in their motivation and disposition.

Consequently, the greatest sign that someone is truly speaking for God is when they lift Jesus up as Lord (See 1 Cor. 12:3). Furthermore, true prophetic utterances never point back to the prophet but should always point to and lift up Jesus, or else it is not truly emanating from the Holy Spirit (See Rev. 19:10).

Finally, all gospel-centered preaching should be such so that it enables the Holy Spirit to speak through the messenger, so the Spirit can do His work and testify of Jesus (See Acts 1:8,9).