

# The Person of the Holy Spirit - Part 1

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There is often a misunderstanding around the person of the Holy Spirit. This is perhaps due to His name, 'Holy Spirit', which to some has connotations of an impersonal force from God, or some kind of mystical fog.

This is the first of two parts in which the aim is to show what Scripture teaches on the precious Holy Spirit, who lives within us and empowers us to live out authentic Christianity.

## **The Holy Spirit in The Bible**

### **Symbols**

Because the Bible often describes the Spirit of God in terms of symbols, and therefore without a physical body, some of us have found it difficult to relate to Him as a person.

Symbols such as the following are used to describe Him:

- Wind (Jn 3:8)
- Water (Jn 7:37)
- Fire (Acts 2)
- A dove (Matt 3:16)

All of these symbols point to aspects of His character, however. They are word pictures pointing to who He is. Wind in John 3 speaks of His sovereignty. Water in John 7 speaks of Him as the life-giver. Fire speaks of His empowering and refining presence. The dove speaks of His graciousness.

### **Distinct Personality Traits**

Jesus is emphatically clear in John 17:7: *'I will send him to you'*. Scripture describes the Spirit as having a personality – mind, will and emotions – which is the substance of being a person.

He possesses:

- **Intelligence and wisdom** (Romans 8:27; 1 Corinthians 2:10; Ephesians 1:17; Isaiah 11:2, Acts 5:3)
- **Feeling or emotion** – He grieves. (Ephesians 4:20; Isaiah 63:10)
- **Will** – He sovereignly decides and gives out gifts and abilities. (1 Corinthians 12:11)

Clearly this is no impersonal force! When we understand that the Spirit is a divine person, we are able to receive Him more personally and allow Him more access to have His way in our lives and congregations.

## **Guiding Us in Leading Our Churches**

Reading through Acts, we find the Holy Spirit personally involved in the lives of the believers. We find Him speaking, guiding, encouraging and leading. He commissions, calls and empowers. God the Spirit was the travelling companion of these early disciples (see Acts 8:29; 9:31; 10:19,44; 13:4; 16:6).

In Acts 15:28, there is a great council of apostles and elders in Jerusalem who have to make a decision about whether the Gentiles need to be circumcised or not. For many of the Jewish believers, this would go against everything they had learned about what it meant to be the people of God. But the Spirit was in the council with them and they were relying on His wisdom. As they come to a decision, they exclaim that: *'It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us'*. The decision was made with a sense of the rightness and an agreement with the Spirit. **The Spirit was in the conversation as a partner with them in leading the church.**

That is how we are to live our lives and lead our churches today. Relying on the witness of the Spirit as we find His wisdom in the Word of God, in the leaders God has put around us, and the inner promptings He gives us. Gordon Fee calls Christians a 'Spirit people', and this is what God has called us to be. To live out authentic Christianity requires walking in obedience to Him, and in intimacy and fellowship with Him.

So in conclusion, we see how Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit is a person with distinct personality traits who is actively involved in our lives, as He was in the book of Acts.

In Part Two, I will look at evidence to show that the Spirit is God and address questions relating to sinning against the Holy Spirit.