

## LESSON 8

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# Getting to Know the Holy Spirit

Getting to know the Holy Spirit is a lifelong journey that will include a great deal of direct learning, experience, and observation. The aim of this lesson is to introduce you to some of the activities the Holy Spirit mentioned in Scripture as well as provide a means to recognize His work in your life.

The Lord manifests himself in and through believers by the Holy Spirit. In one of Jesus' last discourses with the disciples, He told them, "I have much more to say to you, more than you can bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. . . . He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you" (John 16:12–14).

If we are to experience God's manifestation in our own lives, we must get to know the Holy Spirit personally. How can we do this? Let us look at three prerequisites:

1. First, we need to be with Jesus (Mark 3:13–15). We are called to be His disciples. This means learning the Word of God, spending time with Christ in prayer, and meditating upon His life and works. Jesus and the Father are the ones who sent the Spirit (John 14:16, 26).
2. Second, we must build our lives specifically upon the things Christ taught since this is the substance of the Holy Spirit's revelation to us (Matthew 7:24–27).
3. Third, we should observe how the Spirit works in other people. Much can be gained by considering the experiences of others. We would do well to read the writings of Spirit-filled Christians, from

the apostles of the early church to contemporary men and women of God. And when we come into contact with differing views on the Holy Spirit, we evaluate them in light of Scripture, asking the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth (John 16:13).

## LESSON OUTLINE

The Holy Spirit in Creation and Spiritual Formation  
 Characteristics of the Holy Spirit's Ministry  
 The Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus Christ  
 God the Holy Spirit

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

When you complete this lesson, you should be able to:

- 1: *Explain how the Holy Spirit's work in physical creation relates to His work in spiritual formation.*
- 2: *Compare the Holy Spirit's ministry in the Old Testament and the New Testament.*
- 3: *Indicate the Holy Spirit's leading in Jesus' life.*
- 4: *Explain why the Holy Spirit is God.*

### The Holy Spirit in Creation and Spiritual Formation

#### **Objective 1:**

*Explain how the Holy Spirit's work in physical creation relates to His work in spiritual formation.*

#### The Holy Spirit in physical creation

In the very first passage of Scripture we encounter the Holy Spirit. Genesis 1:1–2 says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the

earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” The Holy Spirit waits for God the Father to speak. His word will initiate the Spirit’s work in crafting the heavens and earth for God’s glory and man’s well-being. God’s awesome, artistic imagination will be painted on a formless, empty, dark canvas. After six days, the canvas is completely covered. God’s thoughts and words have become material existence as the Spirit gives them substance.

Note the pattern God uses in Genesis 1 to accomplish His purpose in creation. On the first two days, God *separates* light from darkness (vv. 4–5) and the waters (vv. 6–8). On the third day, He *gathers* the water under the sky and distinguishes it from dry ground (vv. 9–10). Then God *produces* vegetation (vv. 11–13). On day four, He again *separates* day and night (vv. 14–19) and sets the sun, moon, and stars in place to govern the day and night. On the fifth day, He *fills* the sea and sky with living creatures (vv. 20–23). On the sixth day, He calls the land to *produce* living creatures to move along the ground (vv. 24–25), and He also creates humankind (vv. 26–31). In looking at the pattern, you may notice that days 4–6 almost mirror days 1–3:

Days 1–3 (Separates, Gathers, and Produces)

Days 4–6 (Separates, Fills, and Produces)

The differences lie in the degree of separating and producing and the particulars of each day.

If we look closely, we can see that this pattern was not just used at creation; it is also followed in the spiritual formation of believers. The following chart shows how the Holy Spirit’s work in physical creation connects to His work in the spiritual formation of Christians.

## The Holy Spirit in Physical Creation and Spiritual Formation

Genesis 1		Genesis 2	The Disciples	Believers Today
		"Hovers" (1:2)		John 16:8-11
Formlessness (1-2)	→	Fashions [us] (6-10)	Mark 1:17	Romans 12:2 Galatians 4:19
Emptiness (1-2)	→	Fills [us] (11-13, 20-25)	Acts 2:1-4	Romans 5:5, 8:16 Galatians 4:6
Darkness (1-2)	→	Floods [us] (3-5, 14-19)	Luke 24:45	2 Corinthians 4:6 Ephesians 5:8

The work of creation is to fashion the formless earth, fill it to remove its barrenness, and flood it with light to reflect God's nature (1 John 1:5).

### The Holy Spirit at Work in Jesus' Disciples

John 1:47-49 is another example of the Holy Spirit's miraculous hovering. Jesus shares prophetic foreknowledge by referring to an incident that had recently taken place in Nathanael's life about which he thought no one knew. This leads Nathanael to affirm his trust in Christ.

In Mark 1:17, Jesus calls Simon and Andrew to follow Him. This call initiates Jesus' transformational ministry in their lives. Neither of them will be the same as God fashions them not only into disciples but also into apostles, who take the message of the kingdom of God everywhere they go.

In Acts 2, the believers gathered in the upper room are filled with the Holy Spirit. This marks the beginning of their becoming *fishers of men*. The rest of Acts chronicles the ministry of the apostles and the church as the church is empowered by God to do the works of Jesus (John 15:16).

In Luke 24:45, Jesus opens the minds of the disciples to understand the Scriptures, and He floods them with the light of revelation. Jesus makes it clear that it is possible to know God's Word and not know the One to whom it points (John 5:37-40).

## The Holy Spirit in Believers today

Formlessness, emptiness, and darkness are words that could be used to describe the spiritual condition of all unsaved people. Yet, the testimony of John 16:8–11 is that the Holy Spirit is very near lost people, seeking to create an awareness of His conviction in their lives.

While it is natural for us to conform to the ways of this world (Romans 12:2), God desires us to be transformed according to His pattern for spiritual growth. The principles from Genesis 1 and 2 apply here. The *separating* refers to God's call for us to come out of the world (2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1) and into deeper levels of sanctification (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24). *Gathering* refers to our need to be with Jesus (John 15:1–8) and to our receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38–39; Ephesians 5:17–18). *Producing* refers to God's work in us to bring forth fruit (Galatians 5:16–25) and His entrusting us with ministry to others (2 Timothy 2:1–2).

Our being filled with God's Spirit confirms to us that we are His children (Galatians 4:6), whom He loves (Romans 5:5) and empowers (Acts 1:8). Our emptiness is simply an opportunity to draw closer to Him (Matthew 5:6). Then can God flood us with the gospel by making "his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). We can rely on the Holy Spirit.

## Characteristics of the Holy Spirit's Ministry

### *Objective 2:*

*Compare the Holy Spirit's ministry in the Old Testament and the New Testament.*

## The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments

Because this subject is so extensive, we will focus on the primary difference of the Holy Spirit's activities in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. The following chart gives a comparative analysis from five different vantage points. Two words sum up the Spirit's work in

both testaments: anointing (Old Testament) and filling (New Testament). Our ability to help others experience the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives depends a great deal on appreciating the difference between these two terms.

	OLD TESTAMENT <i>Anointing</i>	NEW TESTAMENT <i>Filling</i>
<b>The Spirit's Presence</b>	A "hope" that all could experience (Numbers 11:29); Priests ancestral lineage (Exodus 40:15)	All can receive the Spirit (Acts 2:17). From "some" to "all" (Ephesians 5:18)
<b>Terminology</b>	Bestow, Place upon, Come down, Fall on, Rest on (1 Samuel 10:6, 10) - <i>External</i>	In addition to the Old Testament terms: Baptize, Fill, Receive. From "on" to "in" (Acts 2:4) - <i>Internal</i>
<b>Orientation</b>	Tasks, in the sense of duties or work (Exodus 31:2); Prophecy (Numbers 24:2)	Relationship (Romans 8:16); Prayer (Jude 20); Praise (Ephesians 5:20)
<b>Limitation</b>	Occasional (Numbers 11:25)	Continual (John 3:34; 14:16)
<b>Depiction</b>	Rain (Isaiah 44:3) – "coming down on us," "falling on us," "poured on us"	Spring-fed well (John 4:14), or River (John 7:37–39) – "coming out of us"

The terms *anoint/anointing* occur approximately 120 times in the Old Testament. Literally, the word means to "rub on" or "apply" or "touch." The meaning corresponds to the ministry of the priests in the Tabernacle (Leviticus 21:10), the ordaining of a prophet (Jeremiah 1:5) or king (1 Samuel 16:1). This conveys the idea of God endowing or bestowing (Isaiah 61:1–3) spiritual power or insight to people.

In the New Testament, there are nine references to anointing. Four of these refer to Jesus (Luke 4:18; Acts 4:27; 10:38; Hebrews 1:9). The remaining five refer to the Holy Spirit in believers (2 Corinthians 1:21–22; 1 John 2:20, 27). The meaning of *anointing* from the Old Testament is absorbed into the New Testament meaning of *filling*. We have moved from "Immanuel, God *with* us" (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23) to "the hope of glory, Christ

*in us*" (Colossians 1:27; John 14:17). In the paragraphs below, we will discuss the chart in more detail.

### God's Presence

As the chart indicates, the Spirit's presence in the Old Testament was restricted. Moses' disappointment about this must have been shared by other leaders before the time of Christ. It was not until the day of Pentecost that the Holy Spirit would be released to abide in believers (John 7:37–39).

### Terminology

The language used in the Old Testament shows that the Spirit was a part of God's work beyond creation. The language also indicates that the Spirit was not permanently given to any person. An examination of all the verses in the Old Testament indicates that the Spirit was never *in* a person in the sense of abiding permanently. However, the wording in the New Testament gives an entirely different picture of our being baptized (immersed) and filled with the Holy Spirit. He is not only "on" us but, more importantly, "in" us.

### Orientation

In the Old Testament, the Spirit moves upon people primarily for them to prophesy (Numbers 11:25–29; 24:2–3; 1 Samuel 10:6, 10; 19:20, 23; 2 Chronicles 15:1–2; 20:14–17) and perform tasks that bring glory to God (Exodus 31:1–5; Judges 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Samuel 16:13). In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is the key link in our connection to the Lord (Romans 8:1–17). The church is spoken of as "a holy temple in the Lord" wherein He lives by His Spirit (Ephesians 2:21–22). We are very blessed to be able to know God intimately.

### Limitation

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was poured out purposefully, but infrequently compared to the New Testament. Though God does still anoint in the sense of the ability to perform tasks and minister gifts of the

Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:7–11), we must be careful not to lose sight of His abiding in the believer. If this is not clear, we will be forever asking God to “come down” upon us instead of asking Him to “flow out” of us (John 7:37–39).

## Depiction

The majority of Old Testament Scriptures depict the Spirit as “coming down” upon someone (Numbers 11:25–26; 1 Chronicles 12:18; Ezekiel 11:5). This lends itself to understanding a momentary prophetic word or task orientation. In the New Testament, the Spirit fills us, then works through us. His anointing abides within the Spirit-filled believer to produce the fruit of His presence and manifest His ministry to others.

## The Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus Christ

### *Objective 3:*

*Indicate the Holy Spirit's leading in Jesus' life.*

Luke 4 gives an overview of what to expect from a Spirit-led life. In Luke 3:21–22, we read of Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist and the Holy Spirit's descent upon Him in the form of a dove. Chronologically, Luke 4:1 is the next thing that happened after Christ's baptism. In that verse we read that, “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit . . . was led by the Spirit in the desert.” Jesus is our example. It is vital to understand that a Spirit-led life begins by being Spirit-filled. Let us now study in more detail what this means.

### Jesus resisted temptation (Luke 4:1–13)

The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert where He fasted and was tempted by the devil for forty days. The three temptations recorded in this chapter can be categorized in the following way:

- 1) A presumption upon faith. This first ploy by the devil to get Jesus to turn stone into bread would have reduced faith to a magic show. Although



Jesus was hungry, He did not act presumptuously (Luke 4:13). Rather, He resisted the enemy by affirming God's truth.

- 2) A distortion of grace. What Jesus recognized here was that the devil was in no position to give anything. Only God can give. The devil distorts God's goodness. This outright lie became the source of its own undoing when Jesus responded by saying, "Worship the Lord your God and serve him only" (Luke 4:8).
- 3) A rationalization of Scripture. The devil tried to justify temptation by getting Jesus to twist the meaning of Psalm 91:11–12. However, for Jesus, the issue is not the devil's use of Scripture, but His own. Jesus does not rationalize Psalm 91; He responds with an appropriate Scripture that silences the tempter.

### The Spirit focused and empowered Jesus' ministry (Luke 4:15–22, 32, 37, 42)

From the point of His teaching in Nazareth, Jesus fulfilled His mission through the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Thus, He was empowered to preach good news, free prisoners, restore sight (physical and spiritual), and release the oppressed. Jesus could have done many more things during those three years, but He did not. His Spirit-led life was guided by the unity He had with His Father (John 5:19).

Jesus also lived under the approval of His Father; therefore, He did not need to find significance in people's approval. Still, His effectiveness or anointing in ministry was noticeable to people (Matthew 7:28–29).

### Jesus overcame rejection in ministry (Luke 4:23–30)

When Jesus preached the truth about Elijah and Elisha, people were angered to the point of wanting to kill Him. The basis for Christ's ability to walk away from this early rejection of His ministry was the security He had in His Father's love. He knew rejection would play a significant

role in His ministry (Matthew 20:17–19; Luke 11:15; John 6:60–66; 8:48). Yet, He kept His heart on His Father’s love.

### Jesus chose His words carefully (Luke 4:22, 24–28, 32)

Jesus chose His words to fit His audience. Sometimes He spoke graciously to people (John 8:10–11); other times He rebuked those in error (Luke 11:37–52). In all instances, His objective was to promote God’s truth and love.

### Jesus involved himself in spiritual battles (Luke 4:33–35, 38–41)

It is evident that Jesus’ message carried authority. But Jesus came to do more than talk. His words were often accompanied by a demonstration of the Spirit’s power to heal, drive out demons, and do miracles (Matthew 11:4–5; Luke 13:31–32). Thus, Jesus exposed and rebuked the works of darkness so that others would be freed to put their trust in Him.

### Jesus prayed (Luke 4:42)

Jesus knew He could not fight unless He was fit, so He kept in constant contact with the Father (Luke 4:42–43). Jesus loved His Father and set aside time to talk with Him. Prayer was very natural for Christ.

Furthermore, Luke 4:1 tells us that Jesus was “led by the Spirit.” Verse 43 indicates that Jesus also knew why He was sent. These are the bookends for Christian living—to be Spirit-led in our service to the Lord and to be assured that we are “sent” by God in all we do.

## God the Holy Spirit

### *Objective 4:*

*Explain why the Holy Spirit is God.*

### The Spirit’s Divine Attributes

There are four attributes or characteristics of deity that describe the Holy Spirit as God. The first is found in Hebrews 9:14: “How much more, then, will the blood

of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!" This scripture asserts that the Spirit of God is eternal—without beginning and end. The most basic truths about God are that He is eternal and He exists in the form of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:26; Matthew 28:19; John 14:16–17; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

The second attribute that indicates the Holy Spirit's deity is found in 1 Corinthians 2:10–11: "The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God." This scripture emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is omniscient, knowing all things. This characteristic is also common in the Father and the Son. The Spirit's knowledge is complete, and He reveals the truth to believers (John 16:13–14).

The third characteristic is found in Romans 8:11: "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you." This Scripture reveals that the Holy Spirit is omnipotent or all powerful. It is He who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Also, by the power of the Spirit, Jesus was conceived in Mary's womb (Luke 1:29–37). This same Spirit even makes us alive in Christ (Romans 8:9–10).

The fourth divine characteristic of the Holy Spirit is found in Psalm 139:7–12. David asks, "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?" (v. 7). This passage shows the Holy Spirit's omnipresence. The term *omnipresent* means that the Holy Spirit is at once present everywhere. Matthew 8:1–13 records a story of Jesus healing a Roman soldier's servant without actually being there. Jesus spoke His word of healing to the soldier, and the servant was healed. How did this occur? The Holy Spirit was present in both places simultaneously

to heal the servant at Jesus' word. It is awesome to behold such testimony of Scripture!

As you read the Bible, you will find the Holy Spirit is present in all the mighty works of God: creation, the inspiration of Scripture, new birth, healing, raising the dead, and many other moments. Now, we will turn our attention to the personhood of the Holy Spirit.

### The Spirit is Personal

The Bible shows us clearly that the Holy Spirit has personal attributes. He is not merely a power or force emanating from God the Father or Jesus the Son of God. Consider the following three personal characteristics of the Holy Spirit.

1. He has intellect (1 Corinthians 2:12–13). The Spirit teaches us truth and helps us to understand the mind of God.
2. He has emotion (Romans 15:30). Paul's mention of the "love of the Spirit" hints at the passion of the Spirit in drawing us closer to other believers.
3. He has a will and exercises it (1 Corinthians 12:11). The Spirit decides how His gifts will be distributed; they are His to be used at His will.

With regard to the Holy Spirit's nature, the early believers treated the Spirit in a personal manner. In Acts 5:3, Peter rebukes Ananias for *lying* to the Holy Spirit. In Acts 7:51, Stephen accuses the Jews of *resisting* the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 12:31–32, Jesus makes it clear that it is possible to *blaspheme* the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 4:30, Paul warns Christians against *grieving* the Holy Spirit. Finally, in Hebrews 10:29 we learn that a person can *insult* the Spirit.

On a positive note, the Scriptures show us that we can allow the Spirit to control our lives (Romans 8:9), we can receive the blessing of His intercession (Romans 8:27), see His gifts manifest in and through us (1 Corinthians 12:7), overcome the battle of the flesh within us (Galatians 5:16–26), and feel His joy (1 Thessalonians 1:6). These are just some of the ways we relate to the Holy Spirit.

## Conclusion

The Holy Spirit's work in physical creation shows us a pattern of how He works in the spiritual formation of believers. By looking at the major difference between how the Spirit operated in the Old Testament compared to the New Testament, we appreciate our need to be baptized in the Spirit. Getting to know the Holy Spirit is a lifelong journey. This lesson has offered you a foundation to learn more about the Spirit and experience more of His presence. Ask the Holy Spirit to make the Bible's meaning and application clear to you. Since it was He who inspired the writing of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:14–16; 2 Peter 1:20–21), we can be certain that He wants us to know its true meaning and live it out to God's glory.

### SUGGESTED SCRIPTURES TO MEMORIZE

Genesis 1:1–2

Luke 4:18–19

John 3:1–8

John 4:23–24

John 7:37–39

Romans 8:11

1 Corinthians 2:10–11

2 Corinthians 1:21–22

1 John 2:26–27

## SELF-TEST

After studying the lesson, please read each question carefully and circle the correct response. There is only one correct answer for each question.

1. *Getting to know the Holy Spirit is*
  - a) *the way we get to heaven.*
  - b) *only for very spiritual people.*
  - c) *a lifelong journey.*
2. *Why was the Holy Spirit hovering over the waters in Genesis 1:1-2?*
  - a) *He was waiting to take pictures.*
  - b) *He was waiting for God to speak.*
  - c) *He was waiting to plan what would happen on each day of creation.*
3. *Which three words describe the Spirit's work in physical creation and spiritual formation?*
  - a) *Finding, Filling, and Flowing*
  - b) *Flooding, Freeing, and Filling*
  - c) *Fashioning, Filling, and Flooding*
4. *The Holy Spirit's work in both Testaments is summarized as*
  - a) *inconsistent and impossible.*
  - b) *emotional.*
  - c) *anointing and filling.*
5. *Indicate the major difference between the Spirit's ministries in the Old Testament and New Testament.*
  - a) *The meaning of "anointing" is absorbed into the meaning of "filling."*
  - b) *There is no difference.*
  - c) *The Holy Spirit now lives in the church, whereas in the Old Testament He had no where to stay.*
6. *Jesus responded to the devil's temptations by*
  - a) *praying that God would take the testing away.*
  - b) *asking His disciples to help Him.*
  - c) *rebuking the devil with Scripture.*
7. *How is being Spirit-led connected to being Spirit-filled?*
  - a) *If we are filled with the Spirit, we will love people more.*

- b) *A Spirit-led life begins by being Spirit-filled.*
  - c) *One must be baptized in water to be filled with and led by the Spirit.*
8. *Three characteristics of the Holy Spirit's personal nature are*
- a) *sense of humor, mild temperament, and grace.*
  - b) *intellect, emotion, and will.*
  - c) *kind disposition, tolerance, and innocence.*
9. *Which of these statements is true?*
- a) *If the Holy Spirit knew more, He would be God.*
  - b) *The Holy Spirit is God because He knows all things.*
  - c) *The Holy Spirit knows all things because He is God.*
10. *How can we know for certain that we are God's children?*
- a) *The Spirit testifies to our hearts individually that we are God's children.*
  - b) *Through reading as many books as we can about God*
  - c) *By not worrying about it*

## ANSWERS TO SELF-TEST

Note: If you answered a study question incorrectly, you can find the objective it was drawn from by looking at the reference in parentheses.

1. *c* (8.1)
2. *b* (8.1)
3. *c* (8.1)
4. *c* (8.2)
5. *a* (8.2)
6. *c* (8.3)
7. *b* (8.3)
8. *b* (8.4)
9. *c* (8.4)
10. *a* (8.4)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS LESSON

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