



# The Holy Spirit

## John 16:5-15

By Thomas L. Trevethan

*We believe in the indwelling presence and transforming power of the Holy Spirit, who gives to all believers a new life and a new calling to obedient service.*

In John 13-17, Jesus meets with his disciples for the final time before his death (the Last Supper) to give them important instructions and teaching. Read [John 16:5-15](#). What does Jesus tell them about the Holy Spirit that is particularly significant and timely for them?

Take a few moments to thank the Lord for this important teaching and ask him to give you a deeper understanding of the Holy Spirit. Conclude your time of prayer by reading together this powerful traditional prayer:

*Blessed Lord, who caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; Grant that we may hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of your holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.*

### 1. Look carefully at the text again to understand **who the Spirit is**.

- What titles does Jesus use in speaking about the Spirit? What do these titles tell you about the identity of the Spirit?
- In [John 16:7](#), the title “Advocate” is a rich word that is difficult to translate into English because of its surplus of meanings. Look at [several other translations](#) of the passage and compare alternative words. What do they have in common?
- What pronoun is used to refer to the Spirit?
- How do Jesus and the Spirit relate to one another? Why is it “good” that Jesus is leaving the disciples? How does the Father relate to Jesus and to the Spirit?
- You can see that Jesus wants his followers to think about the Spirit in ways that inevitably lead us to the biblical view of God, the Trinity. (For more on the Holy Spirit, see the Bible study on [God the Glorious Trinity](#).) How does believing that God is the Trinity help deepen and direct your thinking about the question, “Who is the Holy Spirit?”

### 2. **What does the Spirit do**, according to Jesus’ teaching in these verses?

- Make a list of the verbs that are used to describe what the Holy Spirit does.
  - How are the deeds of the Spirit related to the deeds of Jesus?
  - What will the Spirit do “when he comes?” How are those things rooted in and caused by the finished work of Jesus on the cross?
  - In what ways can this information about what the Holy Spirit *does* tell us more about who the Spirit *is*?
3. People often speak about the Holy Spirit using the word “it” (neuter pronoun) rather than “he” (personal pronoun). Even Christians will pray as if the Spirit is some impersonal force or divine electricity. In light of this passage, why is it important to think about and speak to the Spirit as a fully divine person?
4. How does the Spirit relate to the disciples of Jesus in this passage?
- Earlier in the Upper Room with his disciples, Jesus spoke twice of the Spirit. Read [John 14:15-18](#). What is the difference between the Spirit “living with” the disciples, and “living in” the disciples? What does this difference have to do with the disciples not being “orphans?”
  - Is it possible to have an intimate relationship with Jesus or the Father apart from the Spirit? What does the Lord Jesus say the Spirit does to give us an intimate relationship with God the Father, and with Jesus himself?
  - What is required of the disciples to have this “in you” relationship with the Spirit? What actions on the part of the disciples are marks of the Spirit living in them?

### MAKING IT PERSONAL

- Based on this teaching about the Spirit, how have you seen the ministry of the Holy Spirit in your life? In the lives of your family and friends?
- What do we learn from this passage about the way the Spirit will work in us as we seek to bear witness to Jesus?
- In your mission to the campus, how does the Holy Spirit provide motivation, contentment, hope for success, and empowerment for the work?
- Conclude your study and discussion with a time of prayer.
  - Thank the Lord Jesus for his gift of the Spirit.
  - Thank the Father, Son, and Spirit for the specific ways you see God at work in your life and in the lives of those around you and in your mission to the campus.
  - Confess your dependence on the Spirit and the ways you have not depended on him.

- Sing together this [praise song](#) (as the Spirit leads you):

*“Father, we adore you, lay our lives before you, how we love you;  
Jesus, we adore you . . .  
Spirit, we adore you . . .”*

## GOING DEEPER

- The story of the Spirit’s coming on the day of Pentecost is found in the thrilling and theologically rich text of [Acts 2](#). We considered using it for the main Bible study on the person and work of the Holy Spirit, but finally decided to use the John 16 study above. If you have never studied it closely, we encourage you to do so.
- Read through Acts 2 and note every verse that is relevant to your understanding of the Holy Spirit. Then read these relevant verses again and note what they say about the Holy Spirit, being very sensitive to the context of this story. Next, organize your notes into an outline to guide you in understanding what Pentecost teaches about the Holy Spirit. Finally, discuss what you are learning with others.
- Perhaps no doctrinal issue related to the Holy Spirit has been more contentious than the meaning of baptism in (with, by) the Spirit. We can locate this phrase in six passages in the New Testament:

[Matthew 3:11](#); [Mark 1:8](#); [Luke 3:16](#); [John 1:33](#); [Acts 1:5](#), [Acts 11:16](#); [1 Corinthians 12:13](#).

Study these verses, being sensitive to their context, and organize them into an outline that helps you remember what the New Testament teaches about baptism in the Spirit.

## TOOLS FOR FURTHER GROWTH

Christopher J. Wright, [Knowing the Holy Spirit Through the Old Testament](#) (InterVarsity Press, 2006). It comes as a surprise to many that the Old Testament has quite a lot to say about the Spirit. Chris Wright’s treatment of this fact will deepen your understanding of the Spirit and of what the New Testament writers meant by “the Spirit.”

Michael Green, [I Believe in the Holy Spirit](#) (Eerdmans, 2004). This popular classic is a wonderful survey of what the whole biblical story tells us about the Holy Spirit. Green is an English academic theologian-pastor-evangelist, and a participant in charismatic renewal, especially in the Anglican Church.

Gordon D. Fee, [God’s Empowering Presence](#) (Baker, 2009). A fabulous, advanced, technical discussion of Paul’s teaching about the Spirit written by one of the most capable professors of Pentecostal New Testament Biblical Studies. This is a wonderfully rich theological resource, a gift to the whole contemporary church.