

Who is the Holy Spirit? What does He do?

from *Remembering the Forgotten God* by Francis Chan and Mark Beuving

1. **The Holy Spirit is a Person.** He is not an impersonal force or thing. Many people refer to the Spirit as an “it,” but the Bible consistently describes the Spirit as a Person (for example, see Matthew 28:19 where the Spirit is an equal member of the personal Godhead or Ephesians 4:30 where He is said to have emotions). Rather than using the Spirit as an energy boost or tapping into Him like an electric current, we actually talk to Him, relate to Him, cooperate with Him, and make ourselves available to Him. How should this difference between Person and thing affect the way you live?

Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...

Ephesians 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

2. **The Holy Spirit is God.** He is not less than the Father or the Son; He is consistently presented as equal (Matt. 28:19). Just like the other members of the Godhead, the Spirit is sometimes referred to simply as “God” (Acts 5:3–4). How do you think this ought to change the way you relate to Him?

Acts 5:3–4 But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? [4] While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.”

3. **The Holy Spirit has His own mind and will.** He thinks and acts according to His own will and the will of God the Father (Rom. 8:27; 1 Cor. 12:11). The Spirit strategically enables and empowers us to fulfill our mission here on earth. How should the thought that the Holy Spirit has His own mind and will affect the way you think and plan?

Romans 8:27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

1 Corinthians 12:11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

4. **The Holy Spirit has emotions.** Paul tells us not to grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30). When there is disunity and lack of love, whether with other people or with God Himself, we cause the Spirit to grieve. We rarely think about the effect our sin has on God, but He is clearly saddened when we fail to honor Him as we ought. How should understanding that the Spirit can be grieved affect your attitude toward sin?

Ephesians 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

5. **The Holy Spirit is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-present.** In Zechariah 4:6 God calls His people to rely on the power of the Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 2:10, Paul not only says that the Holy Spirit knows everything, but that He reveals truth to us. And in Psalm 139:7–8, David tells us that the Spirit is everywhere, and we cannot escape His presence. How do these three truths affect the way you look to the Spirit?

Zechariah 4:6 [6] Then he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.

1 Corinthians 2:10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

Psalms 139:7–8 [7] Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? [8] If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

6. **God’s Spirit works in and through us in a variety of ways to glorify Himself.** Below is a list of ways that He does this. For each item, ask yourself, “How is the Spirit working in this way in my everyday life? Or how might He do so?”

a. The Spirit **helps us** when we are in precarious situations and need to bear witness (Mark 13:11; Luke 12:12).

Mark 13:11 And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.

Luke 12:12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

b. The Counselor **teaches and reminds us** of what we need to know and remember. He is our comforter, our advisor, our encourager, and our strength. He guides us in the way we should go (Ps. 143:10; John 14-16; Acts 9:31; 13:2; 15:28; 1 Cor. 2:9–10; 1 John 5:6–8).

Psalms 143:10 Teach me to do your will, for you are my God! Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground!

Acts 9:31 So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

Acts 13:2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

Acts 15:28 For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements...

1 Corinthians 2:9–10 But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”—[10] these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

1 John 5:6–8 [6] This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. [7] For there are three that testify: [8] the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.

c. From the Spirit we receive **power to be God’s witnesses** to the ends of the earth. It is the Spirit who draws people to the gospel, the Spirit who equips us with the strength we need to accomplish God’s purposes. The Holy Spirit not only initially draws people to God the Father, but He also draws believers closer to Jesus (Acts 1:8; Rom. 8:26; Eph. 3:16–19).

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Romans 8:26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

Ephesians 3:16–19 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, [17] so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, [18] may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, [19] and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

d. By the power of the Spirit we put to death the misdeeds of the body. The Spirit **sets us free from sin**, which we cannot get rid of on our own. This is a lifelong process we entered into, in partnership with the Spirit, when we first believed (Rom. 8:2).

Romans 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

e. Through the Spirit **we have received adoption** as children, which leads us into intimacy with the Father, instead of a relationship based on fear and slavery. The Spirit bears witness to us that we are God’s children (Rom. 8:15–16).

Romans 8:15–16 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” [16] The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God

f. The Holy Spirit **convicts people of sin**. He does this both before we initially enter into right relationship with God and as we journey through this life as believers (John 16:7–11; 1 Thess. 1:5).

John 16:7–11 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. [8] And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: [9] concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; [10] concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; [11] concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

1 Thessalonians 1:5 because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

g. The Spirit **brings us life and freedom**. Where the Spirit is, there is freedom, not bondage or slavery. In our world that is plagued with death, this is a profound truth that points to real hope (Rom. 8:10–11; 2 Cor. 3:17).

Romans 8:10–11 But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. [11] If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

2 Corinthians 3:17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

h. By the power of the Holy Spirit **we abound with hope** because our God is a God of hope, who fills His children with all joy and peace (Rom. 15:13).

Romans 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

i. As members of God's kingdom community, each of us is **given a manifestation of the Spirit** in our lives for the purpose of the common good. We all have something to offer because of what the Spirit gives to us (1 Cor. 12:7).

1 Corinthians 12:7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

j. The **fruit** of being led by the Spirit of God includes love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These attitudes and actions will characterize our lives as we allow ourselves to be grown and molded by the Spirit. The Spirit is our sanctifier (Gal. 5:22–23; 2 Cor. 3:18).

Galatians 5:22–23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

2 Corinthians 3:18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

k. The Holy Spirit **helps us in our weakness**. When we don't know what to pray for or what to do, He actually intercedes on our behalf. He gives us strength in the midst of uncertainty and asks the Father to work according to His will (Rom. 8:26–27).

Romans 8:26–27 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. [27] And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

What if I don't see these things in my life?

First, ask yourself: am I a follower of Jesus? Have I received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior? If not, then you must first repent of your sins and believe in Jesus and follow him in order to become a child of God and receive the Holy Spirit.

If you are a Christian, then remember the Holy Spirit does incredible things in the lives of His children. But what if you're not seeing His action and power in your life? Don't be discouraged. Remember that it's impossible for you to do these things on your own. That's actually impossible for you--that's why God sent the Holy Spirit! A few possible steps:

1. Now that you know more (or have been reminded) about what the Holy Spirit does, there's one very important question that you need to ask: What does the Holy Spirit want *me* to do *right now*?
2. Take a minute to ponder the amazing power of the Spirit of God. Looking at the situations God has placed you in, what do you think He might be calling you to do through the power of the Spirit?
3. Spend some time in prayer. After looking through these Scriptures about who the Holy Spirit is and what He does, there are bound to be a number of things that you need to begin applying. Ask God to fill you with His Spirit so that the world around you will see His power.

Excerpts from: *Remembering the Forgotten God: An Interactive Workbook for Individual and Small Group Study* by Francis Chan and Mark Beuving. Compiled and edited by Bob Wieggers.

Scripture references:

Matthew 28:19; Ephesians 4:30; Acts 5:3–4; Rom. 8:27; 1 Cor. 12:11; Zechariah 4:6; 1 Corinthians 2:10; Psalm 139:7–8; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:12; Ps. 143:10; Acts 9:31; Acts 13:2; Acts 15:28; 1 Cor. 2:9–10; 1 John 5:6–8; Acts 1:8; Rom. 8:26; Eph. 3:16–19; Rom. 8:2; Rom. 8:15–16; John 16:7–11; 1 Thess. 1:5; Rom. 8:10–11; 2 Cor. 3:17; Rom. 15:13; 1 Cor. 12:7; Gal. 5:22–23; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:26–27