

August 9
Holy Spirit, *Daily Disciple*, page 223



[Psalm 89:6-7](#)

[John 3:5-8](#)

Digging Deeper: Finding out, discussion and sharing

1. In our Psalm reading above, the Psalmist asks the penetrating question, “For who in the skies can be compared to the Lord?” This question can even be extended to the Holy Spirit. It is hard to find words to compare and comprehend the being and essence of the Holy Spirit. Why do we associate the Holy Spirit with a dove?
2. How do we know that the Holy Spirit is a spiritual being and not just a thing or spiritual force?
3. Discuss how the Spirit of God involved in the creation helps provide background for understanding the Holy Spirit as re-creator today.
4. Are there others ways of knowing and realizing that the Holy Spirit is a spiritual being rather than just some sort of powerful spiritual force?
5. In your estimation, why is it important to conceive of the Holy Spirit as a spiritual being?
6. Read the four passages of Scripture in John that describe the Holy Spirit as “paraclete.” From those contexts do you think that the best translation is counselor, comforter, or advocate? Why? And what does this say about the Holy Spirit?
7. What is your understanding of the Holy Spirit’s role in conversion?
8. In John 3 Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born from above. Discuss how the water and the spirit are part of this spiritual birth process.
9. Look up the passages that mentioned “*baptized in the Spirit.*” Share your understandings about each one. Especially discuss the common idea shared by the four gospel writers who use this phrase.
10. Why is it important to realize that the Holy Spirit is given as a gift following repentance and baptism?
11. What does this mean?
12. What are some of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that we find in the New Testament?
13. What was the purpose of spiritual gifts?
14. Why has our fellowship traditionally ignored the Holy Spirit?
15. What blessings have we missed?
16. Is it possible to embrace the Spirit in our lives and theology that is neither anti-Holy Spirit on the one hand, and Pentecostal/charismatic on the other?
17. Can you express or articulate such a view to members in your group, or even others of various religious backgrounds?
18. Do we have any songs in our songbook about the Holy Spirit?

HOLY SPIRIT

Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

The Hebrew word for “spirit” is *ruach*. Depending on the context this can be translated as breath, wind, spirit, etc. In the Old Testament expressions like “the Spirit of God” and the “Spirit of the Lord” are used to designate this heavenly and spiritual Being. Though from a Jewish perspective, there would never have been the thought of a Trinitarian God of Father, Son & Holy Spirit, the Christian reads back into these verses the Holy Spirit. From the very beginning it is the Spirit of God that is active in creation. Listen to the creation narrator: “*And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*” It is no accident that the Spirit is involved in creation. This lays the foundation for what we want to look at later: the Spirit involved in the new creation, i.e., moving upon the human heart and soul and re-creating individuals into the image of Christ.

Holy Spirit as a being

It may be hard for us to think of the Holy Spirit as a being. This is because the Spirit came in the form of the dove over Jesus when the Father expressed his divine approval of Jesus’ ministry and life. Another reason that it is hard for us to envision the Spirit as a person is because of the Pentecost experience in Acts 2. On that occasion the disciples were gathered in the upper room and the Spirit came in the form of tongues of fire sitting over the top of each one of them. At other times in the New Testament, the Spirit is manifested in giving individuals the power to speak in other languages. In John 14 when Jesus engages his disciples in discussion about the Holy Spirit, Jesus very carefully chooses personal pronouns to refer to the Holy Spirit: “him,” and “he.” In fact the word that is John’s favorite for the Holy Spirit is “Paraclete.” This is variously translated as “counselor,” “comforter,” or “advocate.” These are all relational terms describing a person with a role. Read [John 14:16, 26](#); [15:26](#); [16:7](#).

Holy Spirit in conversion

Probably one of the most controversial issues related to the Holy Spirit is His role in conversion. When one reads the book of Acts, it is clear that the Holy Spirit has a very active role in that process. On the Day of Pentecost, on the day of Cornelius’ conversion, etc. the Holy Spirit was very active. I have come to believe that the two sides of a coin provide a good metaphor for understanding this process. On one side, the Spirit convicts through the teaching and preaching of the word, the gospel. On the other side of the coin, the Word works through the empowering, and transforming work of the Holy Spirit. The old discussion about whether the Spirit works only through the word, or separately and apart from the word is really a moot one. That misses the dual dynamic and interplay of the Spirit and the Word.

The specific language in the New Testament used to describe the Holy Spirit’s role in conversion is the expression “*baptized in the Holy Spirit.*” What is absent from the biblical record is expressions such as “Holy Spirit baptism,” “baptism of the Holy Ghost,” etc. According to 1 Corinthians 12:13 every Christian is baptized in the Spirit, and as such becomes part of the body of Christ. “*Baptized in the Spirit*” is used by the New Testament authors 7 times. Look up the following passages: [Matthew 3:11](#); [Mark 8:1](#); [Luke 3:16](#); [John 1:33](#); [Acts 1:5](#); [Acts 11:16](#); [1 Corinthians 12:13](#).

Holy Spirit as gift and gift Giver

Because the Holy Spirit is active in the conversion process, the Holy Spirit is offered as a gift. This is clear from passages such as Acts 2:38. As a result of repentance and baptism, two spiritual blessings follow: forgiveness of sins and reception of the Spirit as a gift. We need to think of this expression “gift of the Holy Spirit” separately from the expression “the gifts of the Holy Spirit.” The former refers to personal indwelling and the latter refers to different manifestations and work of the Holy Spirit through individuals for the body of Christ. The Spirit living in us is affirmed in many places in the New Testament.