

GROWING DEEP IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Returning to Our Roots

STUDY TEN

The Spirit Who Is Not a Ghost

John 16:6–14

The most powerful force in your life as a Christian is something you can't see.
—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

In the Scriptures, the Hebrew word for *spirit* is *ruach*, and the Greek word is *pneuma*. These Greek and Hebrew words can also mean “air,” “wind,” or “breath,” which are fitting metaphors of the Holy Spirit.

Like *air*, the Holy Spirit is invisible. No one can see or touch the Spirit, yet we know He exists and is a dynamic force. Like *wind* that “blows wherever it wants” (John 3:8), the Spirit has His way and can’t be controlled or manipulated. Like *breath* that fills our lungs, the Spirit fills our being, giving us spiritual life. John wrote, “God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us” (1 John 4:13).

And yet, the Holy Spirit is much more than an intangible, invisible force. He is a Person, one of the three Persons of the godhead, the same in substance as the Father and the Son yet distinct in His personality and role.

In this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we’ll look to Jesus to help us understand the special role of the Spirit in our walk with God. Who better to introduce us to the Holy Spirit than Jesus, the One who knows the Spirit best and makes our relationship with Him possible? Let’s listen to what Jesus has to say.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

One vital function of the Holy Spirit is helping us understand Scripture. As you open the Word, invite the Spirit to give you insight.

Father, by the Spirit You have provided through the blood of Christ's redemption, open my eyes to the truth in Your Word. Fill my mind and my heart with the wonders of Your grace and power and help me walk closer to You in the power of the Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

On the last night of Jesus' earthly ministry, Jesus explained to His disciples the Spirit's new role in their lives. In that intense moment, the beleaguered disciples couldn't grasp the full implications of what Jesus was saying. Their hearts were breaking over Jesus' news that He would be leaving.



Observation: The Holy Spirit's Unique Role

Try to put yourself in the scene of the lamplit upper room. Pull up a cushion beside the disciples who had just eaten what would be their last meal with Jesus before the cross. Feel the heaviness of their sorrow, confusion, and fear as they react to what Jesus was saying.

Persecution and Promise—John 16:1–7

What warning did Jesus give the disciples in *John 16:1–4*?



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What reassurance did He give in *John 16:5–7*?

In His earthly body, Jesus could only be in one place at one time. When the Holy Spirit came, He would be everywhere at once. Furthermore, because the disciples would have to trust the Spirit they couldn't see, their faith would be strengthened.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The Holy Spirit's Ministry in the World—John 16:8–11

In their grief, the disciples felt only *loss* over Jesus leaving, but Jesus tried to help them see the *gain* of the Spirit coming. When the disciples went into the world after Jesus was gone, what crucial ministries would the Holy Spirit perform among unbelievers, according to *John 16:8–11*?

My responsibility is to tell everybody that Jesus died for them and that forgiveness and a relationship with God is available through His Son, if they will only believe. I don't have to convince them they're lost. That's the Spirit's job. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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The Holy Spirit's Ministry in Believers—John 16:12–15

What crucial ministries would the Holy Spirit have in believers, according to *John 16:12–15*?

If you are ever in a ministry that glorifies itself, the Spirit of God is not in that ministry. If the leader is getting the glory, the Spirit isn't empowering his or her leadership. Mark it down. The Spirit glorifies Christ. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Functions of the Holy Spirit

In the New Living Translation of *John 16:7*, Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as “the Advocate.” The Greek word is *parakletos*, or paraclete. Finding a suitable equivalent for this word in English is difficult. What stands out to you about the word as you see it translated in other *versions* of the Bible?

The Greek word is made up of *para*, which means “alongside,” and *kletos*, which means “called.” So, the Paraclete is called alongside believers as an advocate to help, counsel, comfort, strengthen, and intercede. His ministry is truly multifaceted.

Jesus was our paraclete before the Spirit. Jesus bore our sins, was resurrected, and ascended into heaven. The Holy Spirit took over as “another Advocate” (John 14:16), but in a different role.



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Jesus said, “it is best for you that I go away” (John 16:7). What is the Holy Spirit able to do for us that Jesus, in His earthly flesh, could not do? Reflect on the *action words* you observe in [John 16:1–15](#), and explain what Jesus meant.

How did the survival and growth of the early church depend on these vital functions of the Spirit?

How does your survival and growth depend on the Spirit today?

The Holy Spirit matures us. He nurtures us. He comforts us when we're fractured with fear. He tells us there's hope when we can't see the end of the tunnel and gives us a reason to go on. He guides us into all truth. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Correlation: More Functions of the Holy Spirit

In *John 14:16*, Jesus gave us a glimpse into the inner workings of the godhead. What do you learn about the relationship between the Father, Son, and Spirit? What unique identity and function does the Holy Spirit fill?

The Holy Spirit is not “energy” or some cosmic “force,” but a Person to whom we can relate just as we relate to the Father and the Son. Also, He is active and involved in our lives, guiding us into truth and disclosing God’s will. According to the following verses, what else does the Spirit help us do and be?

Acts 1:8: _____

Romans 7:6: _____

Galatians 5:16: _____

Ephesians 1:13–14: _____

2 Timothy 1:14: _____

The Holy Spirit holds you until Christ comes and secures your destiny, ushering you into eternity. I call that powerful! In the meantime, He is ready to work and move and transform your life. You have His power, waiting to be used. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Application: The Holy Spirit at Work in Me

Let's pack up our study into four parcels of truth to take with us today.

1. *Because the Spirit is a relatable Person, He heals our relationships with others.* He melts our pride, cools our anger, and helps us experience true fellowship together in the Spirit.
2. *Because the Spirit is active and involved, He comforts us in our sorrows and guides us in our pursuits.* Every day, He leads us in God's path.
3. *Because the Spirit is real and relevant, He gives us power and perseverance.* He helps us in our weakness by accomplishing more than we could ever accomplish on our own.
4. *Because the Spirit is God, He controls our circumstances and transforms our lives.* He prays for us with inexpressible groanings, shaping us in harmony with God's will.

What new truth about the Holy Spirit's role in your life have you discovered through this study?

In what current situation or relationship do you need His power and presence?



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What will you do differently today because of what you know about the Spirit's role in your life?

We can't see the Spirit, but we certainly can see His handiwork. He opens our eyes to truth, stirs our hearts with love for the lost, protects us from evil, restores relationships, draws us close to Christ, gives us courage to go on, prays for us when we don't know how to pray . . . the ways are many! He truly is the Advocate whom Jesus knew we needed.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, fill me with the Holy Spirit. Melt my proud and stubborn heart. Mold me through His power into Your will. Use me as only the Spirit can, to accomplish what only the Spirit can do, so that Christ receives all the glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

