

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

(Responses to questions in red should be completed on the response page at the end of this lesson, printed out, and turned in to your small group leader at your next small group)

We have become a culture that is obsessed with spirituality and religious movements related to mystery. So when we hear of the idea of a spirit all kinds of ideas and images can come to mind.

Q1: What are some of the images and ideas that you think of when you hear *spirit*?

The Christian tradition has also had its own ideas of a *spirit*, or a *Holy Spirit*. This Spirit plays a significant role within both the individual believer and community of witnesses called the church.

Q2: Before reading further, what comes to mind when you hear of the *Holy Spirit*? What is the purpose of the Holy Spirit?

Two of the church's "creeds," or statements of faith, which continue to provide the foundation for what we believe, mention the Holy Spirit. The Apostles' Creed is quite simple, "I believe in the Holy Spirit." That doesn't necessarily help us out if we are trying to understand who the Holy Spirit is. So maybe we can be aided by another ancient creed, the Nicene Creed, composed in the fourth century A.D.

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

Now that's more like it. The Holy Spirit seems to be deeply connected with both God the Father/Creator and Jesus the Son of God/Savior of the world. In fact, they are actually of equal value, which we will talk about more in the next lesson. We see in this creed that the church believes the Holy Spirit is not an *it*, rather a *who*, a *person*. The Holy Spirit is actively involved in creating life and speaking to God's people; the Spirit is even to be worshiped.

For a more contemporary version check this out from a Brief Statement of Faith from the PCUSA, 1983. This was part of a statement that our denomination published a little over 25 years ago:

We trust in God the Holy Spirit, everywhere the giver and renewer of life. The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith, sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbor, and binds us together

with all believers in one body of Christ, the Church. The same Spirit who inspired the prophets and apostles rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture, engages us through the Word proclaimed, claims us in the waters of baptism, feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation, and calls women and men to all ministries of the Church. In a broken and fearful world the Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing, to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior, to unmask idolatries in Church and culture, to hear voices of people long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom and peace.”

Q3: How does the Nicene Creed’s and the Brief Statement of Faith’s illustration about the Holy Spirit compare to your response in Q2?



While the creeds are helpful for a general idea about the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives, these creeds were ultimately developed based on the teachings found in the pages of Scripture. One of the main places we can turn to is the Gospel of John, which some have called the Gospel of the Holy Spirit because it speaks of this person within the Trinity (Father, Son, *Holy Spirit*) more than any other place in the Bible.

READ John 14:12-27 and John 15:26-16:15

Try this: Visit www.biblegateway.com and enter these verses into the *Quick Search* box (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). Then, where it says translation, try about 3-5 different English translations and notice the different ways it translates Holy Spirit.

Q4: What word does your Bible use to describe the Holy Spirit in these passages? What are some of the other words used in other translations to describe the Holy Spirit? What do these words seem to mean?

Q5: What does Jesus teach us about the purposes and functions of the Holy Spirit in John 14-16? Why does God give us the Holy Spirit?

One biblical translation uses the word “Advocate” to describe the Holy Spirit. An advocate is someone who speaks on behalf of another, gives testimony and validates (proves true) the work and behavior of another. In a sense, Jesus is the Advocate of God the Father by coming to earth as a human. Jesus then describes the Holy Spirit as an “Advocate,” as a means to remind us that the Spirit will witness and validate Jesus’ message and mission to the world, even advocating for God’s people and their existence in the world.

John says in 15:26 that the Holy Spirit will testify, or *witness*, to the disciples and the world on behalf of Jesus. He then tells the disciples that they are also to be *witnesses*. So in some way shape or form the Holy Spirit’s purpose and the purpose of God’s people, disciples of Jesus, are very similar. We are both called to *witness*, or



tell and live into the story of Jesus for the hope of the world. We are also called to be Advocates, validating the message of Jesus- the Gospel- with our lives.

The Scriptures use other words to describe the Holy Spirit, like wind of God, breath of God, etc. Yet they all seem to lead us in the direction that the Holy Spirit is God dwelling in the world and in God's people, especially following the resurrection and Jesus' leaving this earth until he comes again.

WHERE DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT LIVE?

The book of Acts reminds us that the Holy Spirit is significant in guiding God's people in accomplishing and living into God's dreams and vision for the world- that all may know and find life in Jesus.

READ Acts 1:1-11

Q6: What does Luke tell us about the Holy Spirit? Where does the Spirit live and for what reason?

READ Acts 2:1-13

Q7: What happens to the disciples and why do you think this happened? What were they able to do, especially in relation to your response to Q6?

God does not leave God's people ill-equipped for what God has called us to do. The Creator has *breathed* into us God's Spirit as a guide, support, and strength as we carry out God's dreams for the world and the message of Jesus, reminding us of all he said and did while on Earth.

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT?

So how can we tell if the Spirit is dwelling in us? We produce what is called the *fruit of the spirit*.

READ Galatians 5:16-26

Q8: On a separate sheet of paper (to bring with you to your small group), compare and contrast the works of the sinful nature (vv.19-21) with the fruit of the Spirit (v. 22-26).

CLOSING MEDITATION (see youtube video on CREDO website)

Q9: Listen to the song Spirit of the Living God while re-reading Galatians 5:22-26. Ask God to speak to you through the Spirit. Which fruit of the Spirit are you in need of developing more in your own life? How can you work on this over the next week or so?

Image to Ponder: The image above is an ancient Christian symbol for the Holy Spirit. Why do you think they used this and how does this illustrate what they believed?



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Q3: How does the Nicene Creed's and the Brief Statement of Faith's illustration about the Holy Spirit compare to your response in Q2?

Q4: What word does your Bible use to describe the Holy Spirit in these passages? What are some of the other words used in other translations to describe the Holy Spirit? What do these words seem to mean?

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Q7: What happens to the disciples and why do you think this happened? What were they able to do, especially in relation to your response to Q5?

READ Galatians 5:16-26

Q8: On a separate sheet of paper (to bring with you to your small group), compare and contrast the works of the sinful nature (vv.19-21) with the fruit of the Spirit (v. 22-26).

CLOSING MEDITATION (see [youtube video on CREDO website](#))

Q9: [Listen to the song Spirit of the Living God by Audrey Assad](#) while re-reading Galatians 5:22-26. Ask God to speak to you through the Spirit. Which fruit of the Spirit are you most in need of developing in your life? Which one do you demonstrate best?



The Apostle's Creed was adopted by the early church in efforts to convey what they believed about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the church, and other elements of the faith. It is a *creed*, or confession of faith, which we still recite today. Throughout the year we will work on understanding this beautiful tradition within the community of Christian faith.

Read begin to memorize the first, second, and third portions of the Apostles Creeds, which describes what the church believes about the Holy Spirit.

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;
He descended into hell.
On the third day he rose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven,
And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty,
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.