

Why study The Holy Spirit?

'Receive the Holy Spirit' **John 20 v 22**

You may have heard a lot about the Holy Spirit... or very little. Are you fascinated by what appears to be on offer from those who claim to have the Spirit? Or confused, and put off by the strange things that the Spirit is supposed to do? There are so many disagreements and divisions around this question of how the Spirit of God works in our lives.

To discover the truth about the Holy Spirit we need to carefully investigate what the Bible says about Him. These eight sessions have been constructed from a survey of every single verse in the Bible that mentions the Holy Spirit. The main themes have been decided by the main themes of the Bible's teaching. And because so much of what we hear about the Spirit comes to us second or third-hand, we may be in for some surprises!

Eight sessions can't cover everything the Bible teaches about the Spirit. Two important facts about the Spirit are not specifically covered:

- the Holy Spirit is a person, not a force (He is referred to as 'He').
- the Holy Spirit is God—the third person of the Trinity (He is referred to as both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ) .

In the early days of the Christian church, a sorcerer called Simon offered the apostles money with the words: 'Give me this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.' For Simon, the Spirit was not a person but a powerful force that he hoped to dispense as he wished; the Spirit was not God but simply a tool to make Simon great; the Spirit was nothing to do with glorifying Jesus Christ, but all about glorifying Simon.

Sadly, it's the same today. Many people who speak about the Spirit are trying to use Him for their own ends, as Simon did. This isn't just getting hold of the wrong end of the stick—Peter called it 'wickedness'. It's vital then that we know the truth about the Spirit. And more than that, each of us needs to receive Him, not so that we can do great things, but so that God's work may be done in our lives.





1 Corinthians 2 v 1-16

THE SPIRIT AND THE BIBLE

talkabout

1. How is it possible to know about God? Discuss how people often answer this question. How would Christians answer differently?

investigate

When Paul wrote his first letter to the ‘problem church’ at Corinth, the Christians there were much more taken with worldly philosophies than the apostles’ teaching about Jesus Christ. In fact, a quick scan of 1 Corinthians chapter 1 gives the distinct impression that the Corinthians were embarrassed, not only about the message, but also about Paul’s chosen method of communicating the message—simply by preaching it. For instance, they were clearly much more interested in the possibility of Paul being a baptiser than a preacher (1 v 13-17).

Paul, however, was clear about his calling, given by Christ Himself, ‘to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom’ (v 17). He was completely aware of what others thought of his ministry—‘foolishness’ (v 18, 21). He was also aware of what people expected in a message from God—‘Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom’ (v 22). He knew what people were thinking, but he was certainly not going to pander to their expectations; he had utter confidence that preaching Christ crucified is both the power and wisdom of God (v 24), and far greater than any human wisdom or power (v 25). Human nature doesn’t change, so we shouldn’t be surprised that people today are also disappointed in the ‘mere’ preaching of Christ crucified, and critical of those in Christian work who don’t pursue miraculous signs or human wisdom.

Having dealt with false ideas about how to communicate God’s message,

in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 Paul sets out the true nature of this message, which he calls 'the testimony about God' (v 1), 'God's secret wisdom' (v 7), 'words taught by the Spirit' (v 13) and 'the mind of Christ' (v 16). This is where we will find out how we can know about God!

▶ **Read 1 Corinthians 2v1-16**

2. How does Paul summarise the content of the message?

3. Paul has already explained that he is not prepared to use miraculous signs or human wisdom to persuade people (see 1 Corinthians 1 v 22-25). So what is it that makes Paul's message persuasive?

4. Who is unable to understand the message (v 6, 8, 14)? Why?

5. Who **can** understand the message (v 14, 15)? Why?

6. Why do we need the Spirit to understand God's message (v 10-11)?

7. In what form does God's message come to us, according to verse 13?



explore more

Read the following Bible passages. How do they agree with what we have learned so far?

- 2 Peter 1 v 20-21
- Hebrews 1 v 1-2
- 1 Peter 1 v 10-12



apply

8. Is it possible to know God? How?

- How should this affect...

... our response to the message about Jesus Christ? (See also John 14 v 23-24 and Hebrews 2 v 1.)

... our attitude to academics and so-called experts who look down on Christian beliefs?

... the way we share God's message with others?



getting personal

Do you know God's message about Jesus Christ? If not, what can you do about it? Can you accept God's message? If not, what do you need?



investigate

In Hebrews 1 v 1-2 (see **explore more** above) we are told that God has spoken to us in two ways: first, through the prophets of old, 'at many times and in various ways'—this is the Old Testament. Secondly, 'in these last days... by his Son'—this is contained for us in the New Testament, where the life, teaching and significance of Jesus has been set down in writing by His apostles. The next part of this session looks at the role of the Spirit in God's revelation through the Old and New Testament writings.



9. What is the role of the Spirit in the production of the Old Testament? Look at the following Bible passages and complete the table.

Bible passage	Who is speaking/writing?	Who is being quoted?	What is said about the Spirit?
Matthew 22 v 43			
Acts 1 v 16			
Acts 28 v 25			
Hebrews 3 v 7			
Hebrews 10 v 15			

10. How has God spoken to us in these last days (Hebrews 1 v 2), and what is the role of the Spirit in that? Look at the following Bible passages and complete the table.

Bible passage	Who does the Spirit help?	What does the Spirit do?
John 3 v 31-34		
John 14 v 16-26		

11. So what should our attitude be to the Old Testament? And what should our attitude be to the New Testament?

➤ **Read 2 Timothy 3 v 16-17**

12. How does this passage agree with what we have learned so far about how God reveals Himself?

- Look at v 16. What do you think 'God-breathed' means?
- Look at v 17. What can the Scripture do for us?
- So do we need more revelation from God?

apply

13. Summarise what you have learned about the Spirit and the Bible.

- How do people carve up the Bible into parts that are trustworthy and/or relevant, and parts that are not? Why is that wrong?
- How do Christians sometimes separate the Spirit from God's Word, the Bible? Why is that wrong?



getting personal

Do you need to change your view of the Bible, the Spirit, or the way in which God speaks today? Ask God to help you make changes in line with what you have learned in this session.

pray

God has spoken to you—and you can know Him! Thank Him for His wonderful grace.

How do you respond to God's Word? Ask for God's Spirit to help you accept and obey.

Pray for those who do not understand or accept God's message about Jesus Christ.





optional extra

What is the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament? Look at the following Bible references.

	Old Testament	New Testament
Hebrews 1 v 1-2		
1 Corinthians 2 v 7, 10		
Ephesians 3 v 2-9		
Colossians 1 v 25-27		
Acts 20 v 27		
1 Peter 1 v 10-12		

