

THE HOLY SPIRIT

LESSON 3: WHAT IS THE HOLY SPIRIT LIKE?

Main Idea: A relationship with the Holy Spirit is the biggest game changer you can have in your walk with God on this side of heaven. It is always possible to have a deeper relationship with the Holy Spirit than you have right now. Remember from lesson one, you learned the Holy Spirit is a Person and not a thing or an it. In this lesson, you will discover what the Holy Spirit is like. You will look at three metaphors or symbols the Bible uses to describe the Holy Spirit. Open your heart and allow the Holy Spirit to teach you about Himself.

Scripture: Isaiah 44:3-4; Matthew 3:11; 5:8; John 7:37-39; 3:5, 8; Acts 2:3-4; 1:5-8



SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

As a delicious aroma is not dinner, and the sound of a bark is not a dog, so the presence of the Holy Spirit is not the Holy Spirit. Rather, His presence is proof of His Person. It can be tempting to think of the Holy Spirit as a silent cloud or wind receiving assignments to different places or people. Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit as a Person to His disciples. He said in John 14:26, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”

The Holy Spirit, perhaps, is the most misunderstood person of the Trinity. (For an overview of this word, *Trinity*, see Lesson 2.) God does not want believers to be afraid of the supernatural, so He gave measures to help us understand Him better and develop a relationship with Him—metaphors and symbols.

One way God does this is by drawing parallels between the physical world and the supernatural realm. Examples include descriptions of the Holy Spirit and His work as cloud, wind, fire, rain, and dove. However, the Holy Spirit is not an actual cloud, wind, fire, or rain, nor a white dove at a baptismal service. These descriptions are symbolic and metaphorical.

For instance, the Holy Spirit can enter your life like water and refresh you. Read about this refreshing in Isaiah 44:3-4:

“For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They shall spring up among the grass like willows by flowing streams.”

Allow the Holy Spirit to teach you what He is like as you read and study the symbols that describe Him. However, remember that He is so much more than just the symbol you read. He is a Person of the Godhead.





CROSSHAIR: Focus on Your Target

What does this study say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in this study below, you will better understand what God is saying to you today.

From the beginning, the Holy Spirit was active in the creation of the universe. In Genesis 1:2, “the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” That narrative culminates with humans as His final creation (verse 26). But the Spirit’s work didn’t end with humans being created. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Life within you that keeps you living and breathing every single moment. Read about this in Job 33:4: “The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.” The Holy Spirit also is the One who gives new life, which is the new spiritual birth believers experience when they receive Christ. Let’s explore more ways the Holy Spirit expresses himself.

The Holy Spirit is like FIRE.

Exodus 3:2; Matthew 3:11; Acts 2:3-4; Hebrews 12:29

Many references in the Bible compare the Holy Spirit to fire, or use fire as a symbol of God’s presence. Take a few moments to read and meditate on what the Bible says about the Holy Spirit being like fire in the verses listed above. When thinking about fire and how it relates to the Holy Spirit, several things come to mind. Read the following comparisons between fire and the Holy Spirit.

1. Like fire, the Holy Spirit is PASSIONATE.

When you think of passion, you might think of love, enthusiasm, fervor, eagerness, or even zeal. What are you passionate about? What fires you up? It is the same thing. In the same manner, the Holy Spirit does that for you. He stokes the passion for God, for holiness, and for people. He gets you fired up. Without the Holy Spirit, you have more of a formal religion than a relationship. The Holy Spirit gives you passion in your relationship with God and passion for other people. He will fill you with the fire of His passion and love.

2. Like fire, the Holy Spirit is PURIFYING. (Matthew 5:8; Revelation 3:18)



Chemists, metallurgists, and others use fire to purify metals. Lukewarm Christians need fire to purify them and rekindle passion. One of the primary roles of the Holy Spirit is to help believers live pure and holy lives. His fire burns out the sin or works of the flesh you do not need. He will do this if you allow Him into your life. The more you develop a relationship with the Holy Spirit, the more He will purify you and cleanse you.

3. Like Fire, the Holy Spirit Is POWERFUL. (Acts 1:8)

When the term fire and power are combined, the word firepower is produced. Fire and power go together. Fire is what powers a steam engine locomotive. Fire is what powers a furnace. Part of the power of fire is its ability to shape things. Those who make glass use fire to shape the glass. Iron workers use fire to shape or forge metal into tools. Likewise, the Holy Spirit shapes you into the image of Christ. Just as fire has the power to touch and consume everything, the Holy Spirit touches every part of your life, to burn away any sin or worldliness in your life and to stoke passion for God and His kingdom.

The Holy Spirit Is Like RAIN.

Acts 2:17

The visual imagery of the Holy Spirit being poured out is what we would associate with water or rain. Phrases like “it is pouring outside” or “it is getting ready to pour” help us visualize what is happening. This metaphor was used in the Old Testament by the prophet Joel to describe what would happen when the Holy Spirit arrived on the Day of Pentecost. It is apparent from Scripture that water is a very clear symbol of what the Holy Spirit is like. Read the following comparisons between water and the Holy Spirit.

1. Like Rain (or Water), the Holy Spirit Is REFRESHING.

(John 7:37-39)

When you are thirsty and dry, nothing is more refreshing than a cool drink of water. Sometimes, in your walk with God, you get dry and thirsty. There are times when you are tired. During these tired and dry times, the Holy Spirit is like a refreshing drink of water to your spirit. But Jesus did not describe the Holy Spirit as merely a drink of water; He described the Spirit as rivers of living water.



2. Like Rain (or Water), the Holy Spirit Is LIFE-GIVING. (John 3:5)

When there is no rain or water, living things die. Farmers depend on rain for a good harvest. When your lawn is brown and dry, a good rain can bring it back to life. There can be no life without rain. Likewise, without the Holy Spirit, you do not have the life of God. The closer you are to the Holy Spirit, the more of God's life you will have inside.

3. Like Rain (or Water), the Holy Spirit Is POWERFUL.

Power generated by water is called hydropower. Water was and still is used to create incredible energy. When you see a river running through a great canyon, you see evidence of its great power to cut through rock and flatten anything in its path. God wants you to develop a deeper relationship with the Holy Spirit so that you can be refreshed, be filled with life, and be filled with power.

The Holy Spirit Is Like WIND.

Genesis 1:2, Acts 2:2

The Holy Spirit is also represented by wind in the Bible. Both the Hebrew and Greek words for "Spirit" can be translated as "wind." The wind that appeared on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 is reminiscent of the wind that blew over the waters at the beginning of Creation in Genesis 1:2. Consider the following two words for wind:

- *Ruach* is an Hebrew word in the Old Testament that can be translated as "spirit" and often refers to the Holy Spirit. In Genesis 1:2, the *ruach elohim* (Spirit of God) hovered over the waters. This word is used elsewhere to refer to breath and wind, for example, in Genesis 8:1 when the Lord brought a wind over the entire earth. The Holy Spirit is like a breath of fresh air into your life.
- *Pneuma* is the Greek word in the New Testament used for Spirit of God. It is a blast of breath. The study of the Holy Spirit is called Pneumatology. And in Acts 2:2, when the Holy Spirit comes, we see a manifestation of wind.

It is evident from Scripture that wind is a very clear symbol of the Holy Spirit. Read the following comparisons between wind and the Holy Spirit to discover how the Holy Spirit is like wind.



1. Like Wind, the Holy Spirit Is UNSEEN. (John 3:8; 20:29)

You cannot see wind, but you can feel its power against your face and body. The same is true of the Holy Spirit. You cannot see Him, but you can feel Him.

God wants you to experience His life and presence. You may have already. Perhaps during a church service, there was a moment you felt a sense of peace or you received a fresh perspective. Or perhaps after spending time in prayer, you felt renewed or refreshed, or you got an idea for a problem you were facing. These are likely experiences of the presence—the wind—of the Holy Spirit.

The problem is that you may not be comfortable with things you can feel but not see. Humans do not get to see everything God does. However, we are called to trust Him. Faith, by definition, is putting your trust into something without seeing it. Part of deepening your relationship with the Holy Spirit is learning to trust Him.

2. Like Wind, the Holy Spirit Is UNPREDICTABLE. (John 3:8)

People love predictability. Because we love predictability, some people choose to stay in bad relationships or dead-end jobs, rationalizing that at least they know what to expect. The fact that the Holy Spirit is not predictable makes some people uncomfortable. When the Holy Spirit is leading your life, it is often an unpredictable journey—an adventure. For some people, this can actually be scary. For others, it can be energizing. In either case, it is tempting to create doctrine around experiences that are comfortable to you, putting God in a predictable box. But God moves in many different and often unusual ways.

3. Like Wind, the Holy Spirit Is POWERFUL. (Acts 1:5–8)

If you ever get to watch a windmill at work, you know that when you see the windmill spinning, the wind is generating power for thousands of homes and businesses. Wind is very powerful. Likewise, the Holy Spirit wants to be very powerful in your life.





BULLSEYE: Zero in on Your Target

How can this study apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:

- Who appears in the passages you read?
- Where are these passages taking place?
- When are these passages occurring?
- Why are these passages important?
- What is happening in these passages?
- What verse stood out to you? Why?



Summarize in the following chart how the Holy Spirit is like fire:

Comparison	Summary
Passionate	
Purifying	
Powerful	

Summarize in the following chart how the Holy Spirit is like rain:

Comparison	Summary
Refreshing	
Life-Giving	
Powerful	

Summarize in the following chart how the Holy Spirit is like wind:

Comparison	Summary
Unseen	
Unpredictable	
Powerful	



Compare all three charts. Summarize the common attributes or traits you used to describe the Holy Spirit in two sentences.

- From the lesson, why do you think God gives parallels from the natural, physical world to help us understand the supernatural realm?

- From the lesson, what are two words used to describe wind?

USING MY *FIREBIBLE*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the *FireBible* and answer the accompanying questions:

- Isaiah 44:3. With what is the future of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit associated?

- Matthew 3:11. With what do many scholars refer to the Holy Spirit with fire? Do you agree? Why or why not?



- Acts 2:4. What are the six meanings listed for the first Holy Spirit outpouring? Does this have the same meaning for believers today? Why or why not?

- John 7:38. What happened as a result of Christ leaving the earth? What should happen through you, the believer, when living water flows out of you?

- Read the *FireBible* article, “Creation.” What do you learn about the role of the Holy Spirit in creation?





TRIGGER PULL: Hit Your Target

How does this study affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers below or in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about what you just studied. How did this study help deepen your love for God?

- Write down a thought from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate the thought you experienced to your family and to others around you?

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