



God, Gift, and Guide: Knowing the Holy Spirit

The Spirit's Divine Person¹

The Church's Trinitarian Foundation

- The church has been Trinitarian from the beginning, affirming that God eternally exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- While the word "trinity" doesn't appear in Scripture, we see this truth emerge through assertions in the pages of the New Testament:
 - The Spirit appears frequently in apostolic blessings:
 - **2 Corinthians 13:14** *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*
 - Salvation is framed in trinitarian terms:
 - **Galatians 4:4-6** *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"*
 - Baptism is administered in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit:
 - **Matthew 28:18-20** *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*
- The early church adopted creeds that affirm the Holy Spirit's divine person:
 - Apostle's Creed (200-250 AD)
 - The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381 AD)
 - *I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and*

¹ This lesson is a summary of Allison, Gregg R. 2023. *God, Gift, and Guide: Knowing the Holy Spirit*. Brentwood, Tennessee: B & H Publishing Group, chapters 3 and 4.

Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets."

Truths About the Holy Spirit

- **The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, fully equal in nature, power, and glory with the Father and Son.**
 - There is no difference between the three persons in terms of attributes, including power, holiness, love, knowledge, justice, etc.
 - The Father is not "just a little more powerful" than the Son or Spirit; they are three, co-eminent persons.
- **The Holy Spirit is to be worshipped and glorified together with the Father and the Son.**
 - Praise, honor, adoration, obedience, trust, and thanksgiving should be directed to the Spirit, like the Father and the Son.
 - We worship, obey, and thank our triune God, with equal devotion.
- **The Holy Spirit is fully God.**
 - He's not merely an impersonal force, power, or influence.
 - We often struggle with the Spirit's divine person because, while the concepts of Father and Son are reflected in earthly relationships, there isn't a directly earthly parallel.
- **Biblical Support for the Spirit's Deity**
 - Ananias and Sapphira
 - **Acts 5:3-4** *But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? ⁴While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God."*
 - Peter's rebuke draws a direct parallel: lying to the Holy Spirit is lying to God, because the Holy Spirit is fully God.
 - Peter's follow-up to Sapphira, "Why did you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord," echoes Old Testament warnings against testing Yahweh (Deut. 6:16), identifying the Spirit as God.
 - Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit
 - **Matthew 12:22-32** *Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. ²³And all the people were amazed, and said, "Can this be the Son of David?" ²⁴But when the Pharisees*

heard it, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons." ²⁵ Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. ²⁶ And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? ... ³¹ Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³² And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

- Blasphemy is speech that insults or shows contempt for God, and only God can be blasphemed.
- Since the Holy Spirit can be blasphemed, He is God; insulting the Spirit of grace brings divine judgment.
 - **Hebrews 10:29** *How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?*
- Divine Attributes Attributed to the Holy Spirit
 - The New Testament consistently attributes to the Spirit those works and qualities that the Old Testament assigns to Yahweh.
 - The restoration of Spiritual sight, ascribed to God in Exodus 34:29-35, is directly tied to the Spirit's work in 2 Corinthians 3:12-18.
 - The establishment of the New Covenant described in Jeremiah 31:31-34 is explained to be the work of the Holy Spirit in Hebrews 10:15-18.
- The Spirit as Creator
 - **Genesis 1:1-2** *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*
 - The Spirit was 'hovering over the waters' at creation, preparing the formless world to respond to God's creative commands.
 - The original state of the world was:
 - Formless (unstructured)
 - Empty (void of life)

- Dark (Nothing can be seen)
 - Watery (without a solid surface)
- “As the Father spoke through His Word, the Spirit spurred on the raw materials to respond obediently to the creation commands.”²
- Creation is a Trinitarian act: the Father speaks, the Son is the Word through whom all things are made (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16), and the Spirit readies creation to receive those commands and affects them.
- As “Lord and Giver of Life,” the Spirit is Creator and Re-Creator, a role that belongs to God alone.
- The Holy Spirit is Not a Power, Force, or Influence
 - The Spirit exhibits the three marks of personhood:
 - Intelligence
 - **1 Cor. 2:10-11** *...these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.*
 - Emotions
 - **Ephesians 4:30** *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*
 - Will
 - **1 Corinthians 12:11** *All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apports to each one individually as he wills.*
 - The Spirit engages in distinctly personal activities:
 - Teaching
 - **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.*

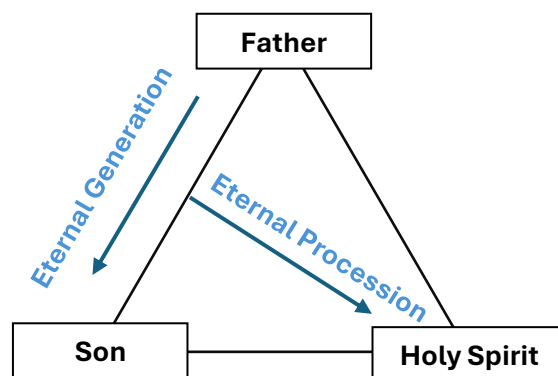
² Allison, Gregg R. 2023. *God, Gift, and Guide : Knowing the Holy Spirit*. Brentwood, Tennessee: B & H Publishing Group, 26.

- Praying
 - **Romans 8:26-27** *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*
- Speaking
 - **John 16:13** *When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.*
- Bearing Witness
 - **John 15:26** *“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.*
- Summary: The Holy Spirit is a divine person, fully God, coequal with the Father and Son.

The Holy Spirit and the Trinity

- The doctrine of the Trinity affirms that God eternally exists as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, three distinct divine persons, each of whom is fully God, yet there is only One God.
- We know the Father, Son, and Spirit are different persons, a point especially clear they’re all operating at once:
 - **Matthew 3:13-17** *Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. ¹⁶ And when **Jesus** was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the **Spirit of God** descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷ and behold, a voice from heaven [**the Father’s**] said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”*
- We discover that the Father, Son, and Spirit have different roles in their missions and in their relations.

- A Brief Primer on the Trinity
 1. There was never a time in which God did not exist.
 2. There was never a time in which there existed a generic god.
 3. There was never a time in which God was only the Father.
 4. There was never a time in which God was only the Father and Son.
 5. There was never a time in which God was *not* the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
 6. God eternally exists as Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
 7. The persons differ according to their eternal relations.
- Understanding the Different Relations
 - There are two relations of the triune God, the relations of *processions*.
 - **First Procession:** Father and the Son
 - Also called *eternal generation*, or *eternal begottenness*, this refers to the special, unique relationship that has forever existed between the Father and the Son.
 - **The Second Procession:** The Father and the Son with the Holy Spirit
 - Also called *eternal procession*, this refers to the unique relationship between the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
 - Graphically:



- The Father eternally generates the Son. This does NOT mean the Father created to Son, and the Son is not created by the Father. Rather, it means that the first person eternally grants the second person His person-of-the-divine-Son. He is *the Son* of the Father.
- The Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Son and the Father. This does not mean the Father and Son created the Spirit.

- Regarding the Son:
 - **John 5:26** *For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.*
 - **1 John 5:18** *We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.*
 - The first reference of those “born of God” refers to Christians who have been regenerated by the Spirit.
 - The second reference refers not to Jesus’s human birth (in that the Father was the one who brought Jesus into existence), but rather that the Son has the quality of always being the Son to the Father.
- Regarding the Spirit:
 - **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.*
 - **John 15:26** *But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.*
 - **John 16:7** *Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.*
 - The Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:32, and this sending by the Father and the Son mirrors the eternal procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son.
 - **Romans 8:9** *You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.*
 - **Note:** The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God (in this context, the Father), and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ (the Son). He processes from the Father and Son.
- The eternal processions are related to the temporal (meaning, acting in time) missions of the Son and the Spirit:
 - **The Son:** The incarnation and the accomplishment of our salvation
 - **The Spirit:** Poured out at Pentecost and applying the work of salvation to our lives.
 - The temporal missions are a reflection of the eternal processions.

Common Errors to Avoid³

- **The denial of the deity of the Holy Spirit.** Because he's referred to as the "third person" of the Spirit (and is harder to understand relationally compared to the Father and the Son), our tendency is to reduce him to a strong power or force rather than as fully God.
- **The denial that he is a person distinct from the Father and the Son.** Erroneous theology, like Modalism, holds that the "Holy Spirit" is just a different name for God depending on his "mode" of operation. However, this view fails to account for when all three persons are operating at once (like at Jesus's baptism).
- **The denial that the Holy Spirit is a divine person.** The Spirit is not merely a power or force; such a view fails to distinguish between divine personhood and power.

³ Allison, Gregg R. 2018. *50 Core Truths of the Christian Faith : A Guide to Understanding and Teaching Theology*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 183.