

The Nature and Role of the Holy Spirit – How to Shepherd

The Holy Spirit is, in many ways, a mystery. The nature of the Spirit exceeds what a human can articulate or imagine. This document, the supporting document on "The Trinity," and the supporting video file titled "The Nature and Role of the Spirit" provide a basic understanding of the Spirit – the third person of the Trinity.

The Holy Spirit is God. The Spirit shares the attributes of God. He is one with God, and wondrously conveys the very essence of God. He is God entirely and completely.

The Holy Spirit is equal to and one with God. He is the unseen Spirit nature of God Who carries out a specialized work on earth only for humanity, not birds or trees or abstract ideas. God's divine Holy Spirit is a real being Who comforts, helps, intercedes, guides, strengthens, gifts, equips, calls, and lives within the heart of believers (see John 14:16, 15:13; Acts 1:7-8; Rom. 8:14, 26).

The Holy Spirit is eternal. In the simplest terms, he is a personality. Unlike some invisible force or ideological symbol of good, He truly exists.

The Spirit, like the Son and Father, is a distinct divine being. Each being has a separate role to fulfill and yet, at the same time, is 100% God.

Explaining the Trinity is much like describing color using only a black and white drawing board rather than demonstrating color on a high-density billion-pixel video screen. It helps our human understanding to use common comparisons, so let's picture the Trinity as water.

Water is a molecular composition that is always water but can take different forms. Water can be a fluid—liquid water, a gas—steam, or a solid—ice. Each is a unique form of water, but still 100 percent H₂O.

Just as the different forms of water can serve distinct purposes, it is the same with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father reigns in heaven. He is the creator and protector of the plan to redeem humanity, the prize of His creation. He sends, loves, and provides for His people.

The Son is the Redeemer, the One who defeated Satan's power and, by His death and resurrection, restores repentant sinners into a right relationship with God.

The working nature of the Spirit is more difficult to describe. From a human perspective, the working of the Spirit seems to have changed after the resurrection of Jesus. Specifically, 50 days after the crucifixion, or the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit took on a new function.

Before Pentecost, the Spirit manifested Himself as a guiding pillar of fire in the days of Moses, as an anointing power which gave Sampson strength and Solomon wisdom, and as an equippier that enabled people to prophesy and write Scripture (2 Peter 1:21).

In Old Testament times, the Spirit temporarily came upon people to help, empower, and equip for a specific mission or task. For example, in 1 Kings 18:46, we read that the Spirit came upon Elijah and enabled him to run "*faster than a chariot*," but that supernatural ability or anointing did not stay with him permanently; he soon went back to running like a normal man.

In Old Testament times, humanity enjoyed brief expressions of the Spirit's working, but He came and went as needed. In short, the Spirit empowered and equipped people but did not stay with them all the time.

Everything changed when Christ died on the cross. He finished the Father's plan to redeem and restore fallen sinful humanity into right relationship with God. After Pentecost, because of Christ's work on the cross, the Spirit began to indwell faithful followers of Jesus Christ. He came to stay.

The blessed connection with the very Spirit of God is no longer fleeting or temporary but permanent. If you believe in Christ (John 3:16), have confessed Him as Lord (Rom. 10:9-10), and have had your sins forgiven (1 John 1:9), then you are saved. You are assured of eternal life in heaven in the future and given the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit today.

Believers today are equipped and gifted by the Spirit to accomplish the specific tasks and roles that God sets before them. The Spirit comforts, helps, leads, and quickens the mind to recall and communicate spiritual truths. The Spirit is part of God and the precious "gift" (1 Peter 4:10) of God for believers today.