

The Person of the Holy Spirit

The titles and images of Father & Son are easy for us to relate to. Holy Spirit is not a title that we have any immediate example of in order to understand what the role and function might be of such a Being.

1. Identifying the Holy Spirit

As already mentioned, the Church has struggled for centuries in attempting to come to grips with the 'true identity' of the Holy Spirit. Is it just the power of God emanating from Him in something like a 'force field' – a sort of muscle extension of God?

Or is He truly a Person, as is the orthodox understanding that was developed as the Creeds were being hammered out on the anvils of biblical truth and theological discussions over several centuries exposing and denouncing various heresies.

Many different analogies have been employed, endeavouring to harmonise the difficult tension between the three-ness of God and the unity of God.

Some popular examples –

- H²O – Water, steam, and ice
- Orange – Peel, pith, and juice
- Family – Father, mother, and child

All convey ideas, but none are totally accurate, and sometimes plain unhelpful.

2. Biblical Data conferring Personality to the Holy Spirit

The New Testament reveals five significant elements that each support the 'Personal' nature of the Holy Spirit.

i) He is referred to with Personal Pronouns

Jesus always spoke about the Holy Spirit with personal pronouns:

¹³ But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.
(Jn 16:7-14)

ii) He is described as having Personal Qualities

- Mind – *He...knows the mind of the Spirit.* (Rom 8:27)
- Will – *the Spirit gives...just as he determines* (1Cor 12:11)
- Emotions – *poured out his love by the Holy Spirit* (Rom 5:5)

iii) He is given Personal Titles

- The Counsellor/Advocate – One who comes alongside to encourage

²⁶ But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

(Jn 14:16)

- Our Intercessor – A personal representative who prays to the Father on our behalf

²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

(Rom 8:26-27)

iv) He performs Personal Acts

He works, searches, speaks, testifies, teaches, instructs, reproves, prays, leads, guides, glorifies, regenerates, convicts, sends messengers, calls to ministry, directs ministry & imparts spiritual gifts as he wills.

v) He displays Personal Feelings

He can be grieved, insulted, lied to, blasphemed, resisted, tempted, vexed and quenched.

(Eph 4:30; Heb 10:29; Acts

5:3; 7:51)

3. Practical & Personal Applications

Since He is a Person who speaks, we can develop a relationship with Him, where we learn to recognise His voice, sense His mood, communicate with Him, and respond to His directions.

- He is our indwelling life source

⁵ And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

(Rom 5:5)

- His is an intimate friendship

¹⁴ May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the intimate friendship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

(2Cor 13:14)

- We are joined in a living partnership

²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

(Gal 5:25)

- With Him we have begun to enter the power of the age to come

⁴ *...for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵ who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age...* (Heb 6:4-5)