



Life In The Spirit: Shaped by His Presence

01 God Promised His Presence

HANDOUT

By: **Steve Ellis** | July 2026

Introduction

*The Bible shares a story of God's desire to dwell with His people. **Life In The Spirit**, considers how the Holy Spirit is God's promised presence, giving life, shaping His people, strengthening His church, and filling us with hope for new creation.*

For many Christians, the Holy Spirit seems like the most mysterious member of the Trinity. We know the Father's stories and read about Jesus in the Gospels, but when it comes to the Holy Spirit, we often have questions.

How does the Spirit work?
When does the Spirit work?
What does the Spirit do?

NOTES:

These are important questions. Should we start with a different questions; **“Who is the Holy Spirit?”** or **“Why has God given us His Spirit?”**

A Story That Begins Before Pentecost

The story of God’s Promised Presence begins much earlier than Pentecost (Acts 2).

“Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” (Genesis 1:2)

Before Israel, the tabernacle or the temple, before the church, God’s Spirit was present, bringing order and life out of the formless and empty.

A few verses later, God forms humans from dust and breathes life into them (Genesis 2:7). From the first pages of our Bible, God’s Spirit brings life. And we are shown how humans were made for fellowship.

Even through the fracture of fellowship (Genesis 3), God did not leave His creation.

A Promise That Echoes Through the Scriptures

As we read the Old Testament, we see a pattern. God makes a covenant with Abraham. He meets Moses in the burning bush. He leads Israel through the wilderness with a cloud and fire. His glory fills the tabernacle and later the temple. Over and over, God chooses to dwell with His people.

The prophets looked beyond their own day:

“And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.” (Joel 2:28–29)

NOTES:

01: God Promised His Presence

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” (Ezekiel 36:26–27)

“For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.” (Isaiah 44:3)

For generations, God's people lived with these promises.

The Day the Promise Was Fulfilled

“Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.” (Acts 2:5)

Then Luke tells us what Peter said to the crowd. Peter pointed to the Scriptures as he spoke about the Messiah:

“Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: “ ‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.” (Acts 2:14–17)

Peter wanted everyone to see that Pentecost was not the beginning of God's story. **It was the fulfillment of God's promise.**

Who Is the Holy Spirit?

When we read Scripture, we encounter different names for the **Spirit of God: the Spirit of the LORD, the Holy Spirit, His Spirit, and the Spirit of Christ** (see Rom. 8:9-11). These all refer to the same divine Person. The Holy Spirit is God's own Spirit. Just as the Father is God and the Son is God, so is the Holy Spirit.

Throughout Scripture we see the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit working together in God's plan of redemption. Following His resurrection and ascension, Jesus pours out the promised Holy Spirit upon His people (Acts 2:33).

NOTES:

01: God Promised His Presence

The one true God (Deuteronomy 6:4) eternally exists as three distinct but co-equal Persons. The word Trinity isn't found in the Bible, but for generations, Christians have used it to describe the wonderful truth of God's nature as revealed in Scripture (Jn. 1:1, 14; Acts 5:3-4, 17:29; 2 Cor. 13:14): God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Why Has God Given Us His Spirit?

Why did God give us the Spirit? Acts 2 gives us a starting point: **God kept His promise.** The Holy Spirit is God's presence living with His people.

The Spirit is God's presence with us now and His promise for the future.

Our study is an invitation to know the God who has always wanted to be with His people.

Continuing the Journey

When someone asks, "**Who is the Holy Spirit?**" the best answer might be found in the story of Scripture. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit who hovered over creation, inspired the prophets, and was poured out on the church at Pentecost. He is God's promised presence.

If there is one point to remember, it is this:

The Holy Spirit is God's promised presence, making God's story our story.

Scripture Acknowledgement

Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, New International Version® (NIV®), Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

For Additional Study

[Empowered By The Spirit: God's Gift to Strengthen His People and Transform the World](#), *Wes McAdams*

[Who Is the Holy Spirit](#): *BibleProject Guide*

[What Role Does the Holy Spirit Play in Christian Life?](#), *N.T. Wright Online* (video)

NOTES: