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How Does God's Spirit Work?

1 Corinthians 2:12: (NRSV) *Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.*

For the Christian, the Holy Spirit is a sacred part of our faith. It was promised to us in the absence of Jesus as a comforter, a guide, a teacher and even an intercessor. It is a true evidence of one who has been called, chosen and working towards being faithful. So, how does the Holy Spirit work in our lives? Who has it and who doesn't? Is now the time for the Holy Spirit to be poured out on the world?

The first scriptural look at the Spirit of God: Genesis 1:1-5: (NASB) ¹*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* ²*The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the **Spirit <7307>** of God was moving over the surface of the waters.* ³*Then God said, Let there be light; and there was light.* ⁴*God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.* ⁵*God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.*

Spirit: Strongs #7307 ruwach roo'-akh; wind; by resemblance breath, i.e. a sensible (or even violent) exhalation; (something powerful but unseen)

In the New Testament the phrase *Holy Ghost* or *Holy Spirit* is ALWAYS derived from the following two words:

Holy: Strongs #40 hagios (hag'-ee-os); sacred (physically, pure, morally blameless or religious, ceremonially, consecrated)

Spirit: Strongs #4151 pneuma pneuma pnyoo'-mah; a current of air, i.e. breath (blast) or a breeze

So, there is the same thought in both the Old and New Testaments.

The root word for *spirit* and *ghost*:

Spirit: Strongs #4154 pneu pneo pneh'-o; a primary word; to breathe hard, i.e. breeze, blow, a root word;

A couple of the seven uses: Matthew 7:25: (KJV) *And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds **blew <4154>**, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.*

John 3:8: (KJV) *The **wind <4151> bloweth <4154>** where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the **Spirit <4151>**.*

Same word <4151> translated into two different English words

By definition of the words involved, we can see that the Holy Spirit would be -in its most literal sense - a sacred blast or breath, an unseen powerful moving force.

Because we understand the sacredness to be from God, it would not be unreasonable to label the Holy Spirit as **the sacred power and influence of God**. Just as the wind has power which itself is unseen but its results are obvious, so is God's influence - it is unseen in itself, yet its results are undeniable!

But the question is, does that definition fit all of the things that the Holy Spirit is said to do?

How does God's Spirit prophesy? How does it speak? Does it speak? Is it in our mind?

Let's look at how Jesus described what it would do compared to how it finally came to be.

Jesus said that the Spirit would prophesy: (This is the night before his crucifixion.)

John 16:5-11: (Rotherham) Jesus told his followers that this Comforter would *reprove the world*. How would that actually happen? Well, let's look at what happened when Jesus' prophecy came true and the Holy Spirit actually arrived at Pentecost. Acts 2:14-43

These next verses show the Spirit reproving (convicting) the world of sin because it does not believe: ²²*Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves also know ²³him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of*

God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; ²⁴whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be held by it.

These next verses show the Spirit through Peter reproving (convicting) the world of righteousness by the raising of Jesus to power with the Father: ³²This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. ³³Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

Peter was moved to say these things beyond his understanding. Pentecost was a miraculous experience. Others were previously given “a measure” of this Spirit but not in such a dramatic manner, such as the prophets like Daniel who wrote what they could not understand.

These next verses show the Spirit reproving (convicting) this world of judgment because the ruler of this world is judged: ³⁴For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: The LORD said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, ³⁵till I make your enemies your footstool. ³⁶Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. So, how did the Spirit do all of these things? Through the words and explanations of the Apostle Peter regarding the events and prophecies!

This gives us a huge clue as to how the Spirit - **the sacred power and influence of God** - was to work in the Christian age - *it would work through the hearts, minds, words and actions of those begotten of the Spirit.* **THE SPIRIT DOES NOT HAVE AN EXTERNAL VOICE OF ITS OWN - IT IS THE POWER AND INFLUENCE OF GOD EXPRESSED THROUGH PROPHECY OR A BEGOTTEN ONE.**

Part of understanding how God’s Spirit works is understanding how the human spirit works. There are some distinct similarities between the two.

So, if the Holy Spirit does not have a voice, then how does it teach us and tell us what to do?

Experience over time can help us develop a deeper human intuition. Luke 12:12:

The Holy Spirit teaching: Isaiah 30:20-21: he unseen power and influence of God is at work guiding our words and actions. What about the use of *teacher* as a description? Doesn’t that make the Spirit a person? We have all heard the phrase, “Experience is the best teacher.” Is “experience” a person? “Boy, did I learn from that mistake!” Is this a person named “Mistake?” How about, “Losing taught me how to win.” Our learning does not have to come from an individual person. It comes from our experiences, observations, thoughts, and so on.

The Holy Spirit speaking: Acts 28:24-27: The Holy Spirit spoke through the writings of Isaiah, who attributed the learning to the voice of the Lord. We hear the voice of God through the writings of Isaiah and it teaches us. Isaiah 6:8-11

The Holy Spirit testifying: Hebrews 10:15-18: In writing the book of Hebrews, the Apostle Paul says the Holy Spirit testifies. Who is giving the testimony? God. How do we know?

We look up the Old Testament Scriptures - this is a direct quote from Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 31:31-33: (NIV) ³¹The time is coming, **declares the LORD**, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. ³²It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them, **declares the LORD.** ³³This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, **declares the LORD.** I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

It gives us the sense that when the Holy Spirit is “speaking,” look at the Old Testament reference. It is the voice of God to the prophet who created a written record for us. Written records of events can serve as actual “testimonies” of truth. We look at the Holy Spirit as **the unseen power and influence of God.** It teaches us, gives us gifts, and moves us to action.

Paul showed us the nature of the Holy Spirit related to other spirits: 1 Corinthians 2:1-14: (NRSV) ¹When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. ²For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. ³And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.

Paul has set the stage... (Remember at this time the Corinthian church was doing many things wrong - they were misusing the gifts, tolerating immorality, misrepresenting the Lord's Supper, and more.) Paul is chastising them.

⁴My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

The Spirit and power of God clearly are God's own - is one (the Spirit) an entity and the other (power) a characteristic? Or are they both characteristics? According to the way the word is used, it leans towards a description and not its own individuality.

Paul first explains God's wisdom and how it is applied: *⁶Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. ⁷But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹But, as it is written, What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love Him.*

Paul next explains God's Spirit - notice to what it is likened: *¹⁰these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. Paul likens the Spirit of God to the spirit of a man - one is not an entity and the other an internal force. Further comparison: ¹²Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. This compares the Spirit of God with the spirit of the world - both can be received in the same way and no one believes that the spirit of the world is its own separate entity. Instead, it is a sense of what the world teaches and brings to us. The spirit of the world means the power and influence of the world. ¹³And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual. ¹⁴Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.*

This speaks of gifts of God's Spirit - His influence and power; not the gifts of another entity. So, is it reasonable to assume God's Spirit works in a similar fashion to the human spirit or the spirit of the world? They are different but the Apostle Paul directly compares them. If we immerse ourselves in Scripture studies and try to understand the word of God, our actual human ability to comprehend will increase. Then the Holy Spirit can elevate our comprehension the more we are immersed. God's Spirit in our lives is life-changing and works with our natural tendencies.

God's unseen power and influence tell us what to do and show us the way: Romans 5:5: Have you ever been involved in some kind of event where "team spirit" got you all fired up?

1 Corinthians 6:19: Another example of our use of language to describe our experience: "Something told me not to go in there." (That "something" involves personal experience, observation, and intuition.) When your human spirit has an opinion, it is not a separate person but rather your opinion expressed to you subconsciously. God's Spirit includes His watch care over us.

How about the Spirit being a witness to things - the same way we are? Acts 5:32: (NRSV) And we are **witnesses <3144>** to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him. **Let's look at the same text from the Rotherham translation:** Acts 5:32: (Rotherham) And, we, are **witnesses <3144>** of these things, - also the Holy Spirit, **which** God hath given unto them who are yielding obedience unto Him. God's power and influence were and still are witnesses - a proof or record of His plan being carried out.

Witnesses: Strongs #3144 martuv martus mar'-toos; of uncertain affinity; a witness (literally [judicially] or figuratively [genitive case]); by analogy, a "martyr," record, witness.

Romans 1:9: (KJV) For God is my **witness <3144>**, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

2 Corinthians 1:23: (KJV) *Moreover I call God for a **record <3144>** upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.*

God’s Spirit works better within us if we are grounded in the truth of Scripture. If we use our human intuition as a comparison with God’s Spirit, when the two contradict, a red flag should go up in our heads.

1 John 4:1-16: *Test the influences that come into your life. Are they in harmony with God and His plan? False prophets provide false influences.*

²*By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that **confesses <3670>** that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. And this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming; and now it is already in the world.*

Confesses: Strongs #3670. omologew homologeo hom-ol-og-eh’-o; to assent, i.e. covenant, acknowledge: con- (pro-)fess, confession is made, give thanks, promise.

The spirit of being *against* Christ is not a single individual, but the result of a momentum building towards a viewpoint. This influence started in the Dark Ages and permeated Christianity.

⁴*Little children, you are from God, and have conquered them; for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. ⁵They are from the world; therefore what they say is from the world, and the world listens to them.*

God is “in us” through His power, blessing and influence because we are dedicated to Christ.

⁶*We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us, and whoever is not from God does not listen to us. From this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. ⁷Beloved let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent His only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

God’s love for us is the foundation for who we can become. The influences and source of truth and the influences and source of error are compared in the Scriptures above. (It is a comparison of influence vs. influence - not an influence vs. a person.)

God’s love for us is the greatest evidence of the source of truth as His love was driven by His plan for salvation. The centerpiece of that plan is Jesus Christ crucified, resurrected and the ransom price paid.

The influence of God works within our lives if we are called of God and allow Him to work within us. We have a choice as to how much of God’s Spirit we allow in our lives or if we allow our own human spirit to override.

¹¹*Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and His love is perfected in us. ¹³By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. ¹⁴And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent His Son as the Savior of the world.*

Loving one another is the most basic and powerful way that God’s Spirit is evidenced as working within us!

¹⁵*God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. ¹⁶So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.*

We abide in God the same way God abides in us. God gives us His power and influence as a part of us. We can abide by God by giving Him our will, our very best, to Him. Our confession of Jesus is our confession of God’s love. To live in this love is to live in the Spirit!

*So, how does God’s spirit work?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*