

**Introduction to Holy Spirit KYB Study** (from an original prepared by Janice Kennedy).

In any Christian bookshop we will find numerous books on the Holy Spirit and His role in our lives. Even if we read them all we would never know everything about the Holy Spirit. And not all books are helpful.

Some appear to treat the Holy Spirit like a commodity, it's as if you can use the Holy Spirit in any way you choose to gain any blessing you want.

Other books seem to define the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives in terms of a formula. To know the Holy Spirit's power in your life you only have to follow the steps the books says and instantly you've got it.

Then there are the theological books that dissect and analyse every word in Scripture that refers to the Holy Spirit so that we see Him as no longer a person but a theological concept.

The Holy Spirit is not a commodity, cannot be understood by man's formula and is not a theological concept. The Holy Spirit first and foremost is a person of the Godhead we call the Trinity. That is one God in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Jesus commissioned his disciples in the way that confirms this. Matt 28:19 says "all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name (not names) of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

So the Holy Spirit is a person — a person who can be known, eternal, unchanging, present everywhere, all powerful, all knowing. Over the coming weeks, I trust each of you will come to know this person better.

The first place we go to understand how fabulous the Holy Spirit is, is our Bible.

It is awesome to consider that we have this book in our hands because of the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those who wrote it. 2 Tim 3:16 tells us – "all Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man or woman of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

Most Christians would agree that the Bible is our source of information about the Holy Spirit. But most Christians begin their study of the Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles, believing that the day of Pentecost is the beginning of the work of the Holy Spirit. However, to really understand who the Spirit is, we need to go back to the beginning of time where we are introduced to the Holy Spirit. We meet Him in Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth; 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.”

In John 1: 1-3 we read that Jesus also was active in creation “In the beginning was the Word (that is Jesus) and the Word was with God and the Word was God. (He was with God in the beginning.) Through Him all things were made, without Him nothing was made that has been made.” So the Spirit of God along with God the Father and God the Son were active in creation.

So that is where our study of the Holy Spirit begins. It’s a wonderful beginning isn’t it?

We are all familiar with the story of the creation of the world “and it was all good”. But then the Holy Spirit was involved in the creation of men and women, for in Genesis 1:26 God says “let us make man in our image, in our likeness”.

And in Job 33:4 there’s a wonderful little verse that confirms the activity of the Spirit of God in our creation. It says “the Spirit of God has made me, the breath of the Almighty gives me life.”

From this extraordinary beginning the Bible leads us from creation to salvation through Jesus and on to life lived through the Spirit, until the time in the future when everything will be made new.

In this study you’re going to take a journey through the Old Testament to discover the work of the Spirit. You might be surprised at the places you will meet the Holy Spirit as God fulfils His promises to men and women.

To Abraham and Sarah God promised children. They were both beyond child-bearing years but God kept His promise and Isaac was born. Galatians tells us that he was conceived by the power of the Spirit.

Some 400 years further on Abraham’s descendants were slaves in Egypt. From the book of Isaiah we learn that God sent His Holy Spirit among them. Let me read a little to you:

“Where is He who set His Holy Spirit among them? Who sent His glorious arm of power to be at Moses’ right hand? Who divided the waters before them to gain for himself everlasting renown? Who led them through the depths like a horse in open country they did not stumble; like cattle who go down to the plain they were given rest by the Spirit of the Lord. This is how you guided your people to make for yourself a glorious name.”

As you study you will see the work of the Holy Spirit in the building of the tabernacle. You will read how God gave His Spirit to the leaders of the nation of Israel; leaders like Joshua and during the time of the Judges. God’s Spirit was active in protecting his people. Then came King David, anointed by Samuel and the Bible tells us that on

that day the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power. At the end of his life, David acknowledged the Spirit's presence in his life in this way:

"The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me, His word was on my tongue."

To David God gave some wonderful promises. Promises that would only be fulfilled in the coming of Jesus as a descendant of David. It's a thrilling part of this study.

But there's more. Men like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Joel, Haggai and Zachariah. All these men prophesied by the Spirit concerning the coming of God's appointed person and what He would accomplish.

Isaiah wrote of the coming of Jesus and described the Spirit of the Lord that would rest on Him. In Isaiah 11 he described Him as the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding; the spirit of counsel and of power; the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. I wonder did you realise how much there is about the Spirit of God in the Old Testament?

All this you will discover over the first weeks of this study. It lays a wonderful foundation for what you will learn about the Spirit of God in the New Testament.

The study begins in the New Testament by showing how the Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in the coming of Jesus. Wherever you look there is evidence of the Holy Spirit. The angel announced that the Spirit would come on Mary to enable her, a virgin, to have a child. This would be a confirmation of the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14.

The Holy Spirit was evident in the lives of Elizabeth & Zachariah, the parents of John the Baptist. John the Baptist whose mission it was to announce the coming of Jesus to the world. He is said to have been filled with the Holy Spirit from birth.

At the time Jesus was presented at the temple when he was 8 days old, Joseph and Mary were met by an old, devout man named Simeon. He was filled by the Holy Spirit and declared that he had seen with his own eyes, God's salvation. It is remarkable that Simeon declared that this salvation was for both Jews and Gentiles.

Jesus' entry into public ministry was announced by the coming of the Spirit at Jesus' baptism. Luke 4 tell us that following His baptism, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert where He was tempted by Satan. Following His temptation, Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. Then He returned to His hometown of Nazareth where He went to the synagogue and read from the prophet Isaiah. It must have been a stunning moment when Jesus read "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, He has sent me to proclaim freedom to the prisoners and recovery of sight for blind; to release the oppressed and proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

So Jesus began His public ministry of teaching and preaching. He spoke rarely about the Spirit publicly. He spoke to Nicodemus of the work of the Spirit in salvation. He spoke about the sin of rejecting the Holy Spirit. He invited people to come to Him with their spiritual thirst and He would give them streams of living water, meaning they would receive the Holy Spirit.

Some of the most precious parts of the New Testament are Jesus' words to His disciples about the coming of the Holy Spirit. From John chapters 14 – 17, we get to understand the relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit and Jesus and the Father. It's in these chapters that Jesus tells His disciples of the wonderful work that the Holy Spirit will do in those who believe in Him.

The disciples were confused and did not understand. But they would — on the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit came in power on the disciples and the church was born.

So, with all this background, you will arrive at the place where most Christians begin their study of the Holy Spirit.

The Acts of the Apostles opens with the account of the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. It was truly an amazing day and began the spread of the Gospel across the Roman Empire.

The early chapters of Acts tell the story of the transformation of the disciples who had fled when Jesus was arrested. Peter, who had denied knowing Jesus, becomes the bold preacher, the leader in the church. The Spirit gave Peter a new understanding of the message of the prophets. The Spirit enabled Peter and the apostles to perform miracles. He and John were arrested and testified before the Sanhedrin, and the number of believers grew dramatically.

We see Philip busy in evangelism. We meet Barnabas and Stephen and other godly men. The message of Jesus had begun to spread beyond Jerusalem. The group of believers were meeting together in Damascus, 700km north of Jerusalem. The coming of the Spirit had brought wonderful transformation to the lives of thousands of men and women. It was a great time to be alive. But this was only the beginning of their spiritual transformation. To know the rest of the transformation story, we have to read the rest of the New Testament.

Along with the growth of the church, persecution broke out. We need to remember the two sides of the Pentecost story. Wonderful things happened, great miracles were performed. But in those early years many believers lost their lives. Families were decimated. Children left orphans; wives lost their husbands; husbands lost their wives. The believers lived in great fear of the persecution they saw. And there arose great consternation when non-Jews became Christians. Jews felt a sense of superiority in their relationship with God which Gentiles did not have. Many maintained their commitment to law-keeping. Instead of desiring that believers

become more like the Lord Jesus, they wanted believers to more like them. So disagreements arose between Jews who were believers about how they should relate to Gentiles who became believers.

However little by little as the Holy Spirit worked in the lives of individual Jews who believed that Jesus was the Messiah and their Saviour, they learned to accept those from totally pagan backgrounds.

The persecutor Saul was converted and became a much travelled missionary. As the Apostle Paul, he made a huge contribution to the growth of the church through the Roman Empire.

The last two studies move to the work of the Spirit in the life of the individual believer. As you look at the work of the Spirit, you will be touched by His deep personal work of putting into effect all that Jesus has accomplished. The Spirit's goal is to glorify Jesus in us and through us, and this means working in us to produce Christlikeness. He wants us to be like Jesus and to know Him more intimately.

So in these studies you will be thinking about the blessing that we have as believers as a result of the Spirit's presence in our lives. You will be challenged to live by the Spirit, to grow in your understanding of the Spirit's work in individual lives.

To live by the Spirit is to live without condemnation.

We may be struggling but we are not condemned. It's such great news.

Eugene Petersen in *The Message* says it this way: "those who enter into Christ's being-here-for-us no longer have to live in a continuous low lying, black cloud. A new power is in operation. The spirit of life in Christ is like a strong wind has magnificently cleared the air, freeing us from a fated lifetime of brutal tyranny at the hands of sin and death."

This is a truth that can free us from our black clouds of condemnation. Maybe you grew up feeling condemned and carry that feeling into your relationship with God. You may feel condemned by the way you lived your life before becoming a Christian. You may feel condemned because of something you have done since becoming a Christian.

The wonderful truth is that because of Christ's death and the coming of the Spirit, we are able to live without condemnation. Along with the challenge to live in the freedom of the Spirit, is a reminder of the Spirit's help for our weakness. The Spirit has been provided by a loving God, who understands our failure and has provided all that we need through His Spirit.

Finally we are reminded in this study that we are not just individuals but part of a community of believers. We are fellow citizens and members of God's own one

household. We are a new holy temple where God dwells with His Spirit. We are one body under one Spirit with one Lord, one faith and one baptism. So the challenge is to take our place within the body of Christ. To discover our gifts given by the Spirit for the good of others. Like a body, the Church works most effectively when every part contributes. Every part is needed and all the parts work together in unity.

As we find our place we are filled with the Spirit. He is available to all of us, with all of His power and majesty to fulfil God's purposes in our lives. As this study comes to a close, we are reminded of the future when Jesus will return and everything is made new. The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives now is God's guarantee that this great and grand future will be ours.

It's a great study you are beginning and such a lot of learning to be done. There are many challenges along the way. But you can be sure of the Spirit's help.

So may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.