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The Holy Spirit and Spirituality

Many of us have heard the words: “And I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” And, if baptized, we surely heard them just before a minister immersed us in the water (*see Matt. 28:19*).

Baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, *and the Holy Spirit*. Yes, the Spirit is mentioned right there with the Father and the Son.

And no wonder. The Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Fundamental Belief number 5, “God the Holy Spirit,” reads: “God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in Creation, incarnation, and redemption. He is as much a person as are the Father and the Son. He inspired the writers of Scripture. He filled Christ’s life with power. He draws and convicts human beings; and those who respond He renews and transforms into the image of God. Sent by the Father and the Son to be always with His children, He extends spiritual gifts to the church, empowers it to bear witness to Christ, and in harmony with the Scriptures, leads it into all truth.”

Nevertheless, as we read the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, we see the direct activity and work of God the Father. His actions are everywhere. In the New Testament, especially the Gospels, we read again and again about the work and activity of Jesus, the Son. Jesus—His life, death, and ministry in heaven—dominates the New Testament.

In contrast to the activity of both the Father and the Son, the work of the Holy Spirit is not as openly depicted in either Testament.

But there is a reason for this contrast: the Holy Spirit does not seek to be the center of attention. He plays more of a behind-the-scenes role. The Father and the Son are more directly revealed in the Word. And that's because the Holy Spirit is there to point us, not to Himself, but to Jesus and what Jesus has done for us.

As we study the work of the Holy Spirit, we will see how central He is to our Christian experience. The Holy Spirit, God Himself, knows God as no person can; thus, He reveals God to us in a trustworthy and reliable manner. The Holy Spirit first inspired the Bible writers, and the Holy Spirit today guides us in our study of what He had inspired these writers to communicate. The Holy Spirit gives assurance of our salvation through Jesus Christ (*Rom. 8:16*), and He gives evidence of God's work in us (*1 John 3:24*). The Holy Spirit also cleanses us from sin and sanctifies us. "You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (*1 Cor. 6:11, RSV*). The Spirit produces in us lifelong growth in holiness, bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit within us—"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (*Gal. 5:22, 23, NASB*).

"The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, *and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail*. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 671, *italics supplied*.

Because of His crucial role in the lives of believers, this quarter's study will help us better understand the great gift we have in the Holy Spirit.

As we study the work of the Holy Spirit, we will see how central He is to our Christian experience. The Holy Spirit, God Himself, knows God as no person can; thus, He reveals God to us in a trustworthy and reliable manner.

At the time of this writing, Frank M. Hasel, PhD, was dean of the Theological Department at Bogenhofen Seminary in Austria, Europe, where he also was the director of the Ellen G. White Study Center. In 2009 his wife died of cancer. Since then he has learned to trust God's goodness in new ways every day and experiences the comfort, peace, and transforming power of the Holy Spirit in his life.
