

Symbols of the Holy Spirit

Passages: Eph 1:13; Acts 2; Isa 4:4; Ps 72:6; Jn 7:37–39; Heb 1:9; Mt 3:16; Eph 2:14–17

Memory Verse

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:25)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
1. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, and He can assist us in many ways. 2. The Holy Spirit is represented by many symbols.	God is Spirit.	Rely on the Holy Spirit to renew, refine, and sanctify us.

Overview

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Symbols of the Holy Spirit

1. Seal
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3. Fire
4. Rain
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Memory Verse

Conclusion: By studying the symbols of the Holy Spirit, we can understand how the Holy Spirit refines us, renews us, sanctifies us, and gives us the strength to work for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Teachings

Symbols of the Holy Spirit

The most vivid description of the Holy Spirit can be found when He first descended on the Day of Pentecost:

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where [the disciples] were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

(Acts 2:2–4)

These verses describe images of wind and fire but use the words “as of” to show that the Spirit is not wind or fire itself. Rather, “wind” and “fire” are the closest descriptors humans can use to illustrate what the Spirit of God is like.

There are more than ten different symbols that represent God’s Spirit. Symbols allow us to understand abstract concepts in more tangible terms. They can also help us understand more about God’s teachings. Jesus Christ used parables to teach about the kingdom of heaven. Similarly, we can learn more about God’s Spirit through visual symbols. Today, we will study seven symbols that the Bible uses to teach us about the Holy Spirit.

1. Seal

- “[Having] believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” (Eph 1:13–14)
- “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.” (Rom 8:16–17)
- “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God; by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” (Eph 4:30)

Purpose

A seal is like a signature. It serves to show legal recognition of ownership and authority. When an individual places a seal on an official document, the document then wields authority and power provided by the seal. Ephesians 1:13 tells us that the Holy Spirit is the seal that guarantees our inheritance in Christ Jesus. God has “sealed” us with His Holy Spirit; He lives inside us and has “sealed” us for the day of redemption. Since God is the sealer, we can rest assured that we will be with Him one day.

2. Wind

- *And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

(Acts 2:2–4)

- *Also He said to me, “Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they*

may live.” ‘ ‘ So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.

(Ezek 37:9–10)

Purposes

- a. “Wind,” “breath,” and “Spirit” are the same word in Hebrew and Greek. We know that breath sustains life. Likewise, our soul cannot live without the Spirit of God because the wind, or Holy Spirit, is our breath (Ezek 37:9–10, 14).
- b. Wind is invisible and is full of force and strength, like the Spirit of God. We cannot see the wind, but we know it is around us (Jn 3:8). Similarly, when we pray in tongues, sometimes our bodies will move, indicating that we have the Holy Spirit. During the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came with the sound of a rushing mighty wind. In Acts 2:14–39, we can see how the pouring out of the Holy Spirit gave the apostles the power to preach the good news of Jesus Christ’s resurrection. Today, when the Spirit fills us, He also empowers us to do the work God has entrusted us with.
- c. In the Book of Ezekiel, chapter 37, the prophet Ezekiel has a vision about the resurrecting power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit’s power of regeneration revived all the dead bones in that valley! What does that teach us about the Holy Spirit? In this vision, the wind is used to symbolize the Holy Spirit (Ezek 37:9–10). The same power of regeneration can revive your “dry bones” today! The Holy Spirit produces spiritual life in anyone who seems to be spiritually “dry,” or cold and unresponsive to spiritual matters.

3. Fire

- “When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning.” (Isa 4:4)
- “Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.” (Acts 2:3)

Purposes

- a. Fire can burn things away. God told His people that they need a spirit of burning to remove their impurities. Today, the Holy Spirit burns away our filth (Isa 4:4). Just as fire refines metals by removing impurities, the Spirit of God strips away all impurities and evil within us so that we are less tempted to sin. Simultaneously, He burns within us, compelling us to shun temptation in favor of doing good. The Holy Spirit can spiritually burn away any undesirable elements in our lives in order to refine, renew, and sanctify us (Tit 3:5).
- b. Fire is a source of light. The light of the Holy Spirit shines in us (2 Cor 4:6). Jesus Christ commanded us to let the light shine forth and not to hide it under a basket (Mt 5:14–16). When the Spirit of God fills us, others should be able to see Him in our actions. The fruit that we bear should show the light of God.
- c. Fire can melt materials and fuse objects together. Similarly, the Holy Spirit joins the many different believers into one body so that we are together in the church of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 12:13; Eph 4:3).

4. Rain

- “He shall come down like rain upon the grass before mowing, like showers that water the earth.” (Ps 72:6)
- “Ask the LORD for rain in the time of the latter rain. The LORD will make flashing clouds; He will give them showers of rain, grass in the field for everyone.” (Zech 10:1)

Purpose

Rain brings restoration. Rain is vital to life, growth, and good health. Without rain, vegetation would be unable to grow, and we would not have water to drink for nourishment. When the land becomes dry, it needs rain in order to experience a complete restoration (Isa 55:10). Like dry land, our hearts can become hardened, making it difficult for the word of God to take root and grow. So, we need the work of the Holy Spirit to restore us. The Spirit of God comes to us like rain, which waters the soil (Hos 6:3). He can restore the human heart from a barren wilderness to a nourishing field that bears fruit (Isa 32:15–16; Gal 5:22–23).

5. Water

- “[But] whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.” (Jn 4:14)
- “On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ ” (Jn 7:37–38)
- “For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, and My blessing on your offspring.” (Isa 44:3)

Purposes

- a. Water relieves those who are thirsty (Ps 104:10–11; Jn 4:13). The Holy Spirit fulfills humanity’s spiritual thirst (Jn 4:14; Rev 22:17). We will never be spiritually thirsty again if we continually drink this spiritual water, which flows through us like “rivers of living water” (Jn 7:37–38), bringing us satisfaction. In addition, when we yield our mind and heart to God, the abundance of “living water,” which is the life of Jesus Christ, will flow out from us toward those around us. Living water is never stagnant; it produces an abundant and dynamic spirit-filled life.
- b. The Bible often refers to the washing away of our sins (Num 31:24; Heb 10:22). In the same way that water washes away filth, the Holy Spirit is a cleansing agent that sanctifies us (Rom 15:16; 2 Thess 2:13).

Additional Meanings

- Water flows downward, which also teaches us that the Holy Spirit will be given to those who are humble (Acts 5:32; 1 Pet 5:5).
- Our lives would be severely affected if we do not have a steady supply of water. Similarly, we need the Holy Spirit flowing inside us every day.

6. Oil

- “Command the children of Israel that they bring to you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to make the lamps burn continually.” (Lev 24:2)
- “[How] God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.” (Acts 10:38)
- “You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions.” (Heb 1:9)

Purposes

- a. God sanctified oil for use in anointing objects and people, such as priests, prophets, and kings (Ex 30:25–29; 40:12–15; 1 Kgs 19:16; 1 Sam 16:12). In Acts 10:38, God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit when He began His ministry. Similarly, believers whom God uses in His ministry today must also be anointed by the Holy Spirit (Lk 4:18; Acts 1:4–5, 8). The Bible has named us holy priests (1 Pet 2:5; Rev 1:6), and as His priests, we must be anointed by the Holy Spirit before we can devote ourselves to the work of the God.
- b. Oil is used as fuel for lamps (Lev 24:2). Without oil, a lamp would be unable to give light. Today, we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit in order to radiate the light of life to all who are around us (Mt 5:16). We also need to make sure our lamps are filled with oil so that we can enter the marriage feast to see our Lord Jesus (Mt 25:1–13).
- c. Oil is used to treat wounds. In the Gospel of Luke, a good Samaritan “went to [an injured man] and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him” (Lk 10:34). True healing can only be found in God.
- d. Oil is used to sustain lives. Elisha performed a miracle for the poor widow so that she could live (2 Kgs 4:1–7). Likewise, the Holy Spirit sustains us like oil, providing us love and abundant grace.
- e. Oil is likened to gladness (Heb 1:9). When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we will have joy, which is a characteristic of the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

7. Dove

- “And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, ‘You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.’” (Lk 3:22)
- “O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.” (Song 2:14)
- “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” (Mt 10:16)

Purposes

- a. Doves were clean animals used for burnt offerings in the Old Testament (Lev 1:14; 12:8). The Bible used doves as a contrast to ravens, which were unclean. Being baptized in the Spirit makes us clean in God’s eyes.
- b. Doves are faithful to their mates, so a dove symbolizes an ideal bride, as described in the Song of Solomon (Song 5:2; 6:9). We can only be faithful to God if we have the Spirit to help us.
- c. After the great flood recorded in the Book of Genesis, Noah sent out a dove from the ark, and it came back with an olive leaf in its beak (Gen 8:11). God wanted mankind to have peace after the flood, which had destroyed all wickedness. Thus, the dove symbolizes peace and reconciliation with God (Eph 2:14–17). Our Lord Jesus who died for us is the only one who can bring peace. When we allow the Holy Spirit to dwell within us and live in peace with Him, we can enjoy peace with God and with men.
- d. Doves are also seen as gentle because they are so harmless (Mt 10:16; Gal 5:23). When we follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can learn to be as harmless and gentle as doves.

Check for Understanding

Name each symbol of the Holy Spirit and one of its purposes or meanings.

1. Seal (guarantees our inheritance in Christ Jesus)
2. Wind (sustains life, empowers us, and produces spiritual life in the spiritually “dry”)
3. Fire (burns away impurities, provides light, and joins believers into one body)
4. Rain (restores)

5. Water (quenches our thirst, fills us, and sanctifies us)
6. Oil (anoints us, fuels our light, gives us healing, sustains us, and gives us joy)
7. Dove (purifies us, helps us to remain faithful to God, gives us peace and reconciliation with God, and teaches us to be harmless and gentle)

Life Application

My Relationship with God

Most mothers will tell you that the most difficult part of being pregnant is the actual birth. While the birth may indeed be the climax of a pregnancy, it is only the start of a whole new journey, for both the parents and the child. Once the baby is born, the new mother and father now face the lifelong task of nurturing the child and helping him or her grow. In fact, birth is the beginning of a new life and new relationships. In the same way, many people find it difficult to pray for the Holy Spirit. But once we have received the Holy Spirit, it is the beginning of a whole new relationship with God.

From studying the many symbols of the Holy Spirit, we now understand that when we develop a relationship with God, He can accomplish many things in our lives. For this reason, it is important for us to regularly examine ourselves and our spiritual relationship with God. If we have the Holy Spirit, do we have the fullness of Him? If we do not, is there something that is preventing us from receiving Him?

Review each symbol below and answer the questions honestly. Is there something you need to determine to strive for? Make it your goal this quarter so that you may experience the fullness of God’s Spirit working inside you.

Seal	<i>Do I have the full assurance that God has sealed me? Do I believe and trust that one day I will enter the kingdom of God because I have been sealed with the Holy Spirit?</i>
Wind	The Holy Spirit is so powerful that He can revive us, just as the wind breathed life into the valley of dry bones (Ezek 37)! The same power of regeneration can fill your “dry bones” today! <i>Think about some dry or cold areas in your spiritual life that need the power of the Holy Spirit. Set a goal to pray for the power of the Holy Spirit.</i>
Fire	Like fire, the Holy Spirit can spiritually <u>burn</u> away any undesirable elements in our lives in order to refine, renew, and sanctify us (Tit 3:5). We need to confess, repent, and convict ourselves of the sin that we have committed. Let the Holy Spirit burn within us. No one enjoys the refining process, but in order to return to God and to ensure that our prayers are not hindered, we must allow the Holy Spirit of fire to “burn” our hearts thoroughly. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Have you ever allowed the Holy Spirit to burn within you so that you no longer feel attracted to the sinful pleasures of the world?</i> 2. <i>Are you willing to ask the Holy Spirit to burn mightily in order to remove all personal will and ambition, and to break your “own self,” so that you count everything as loss like the apostle Paul?</i> 3. <i>Are you willing to allow the Holy Spirit to compel you to focus on matters that are spiritual?</i>
Rain	Rain <u>refreshes</u> the thirsty and brings <u>restoration</u> . We need sufficient rain in order to be fruitful. The Holy Spirit is the answer for our deepest inner thirst. When the Holy Spirit fills us, it is like rain pouring down onto dry ground. If we earnestly seek for Him, we’ll see God’s blessings pour down onto our lives so that we can blossom again.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Is your heart dry and barren, like a hard field?</i> 2. <i>What will you do in order to be filled by the Holy Spirit so that the word of God can take root and sprout?</i>
Water	<p>Water relieves those who are <u>thirsty</u>. The Holy Spirit satisfies our spiritual thirst (Jn 4:14; Rev 22:17).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>The Holy Spirit will fill us, but we have to make room in our hearts. Have you ever thirsted for God's words? For more of His presence in your heart?</i> 2. <i>Water is a cleansing element; it cleanses us from sin and purifies us. What do you need to cleanse this week in order to be freed from sin?</i>
Oil	<p><i>Pick one function of oil that you need the most this week from the list below.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Just as priests and kings were anointed with oil as a means of <u>separating themselves to be holy</u> for God's work, I need the anointing of oil in my life <u>to devote myself</u> to the work of God. b. Oil was used as <u>fuel</u> for lamps; I need oil to radiate the light of life to those around me. c. I need oil to make sure I'm <u>ready to see</u> my Lord Jesus when He comes back. d. I need oil to <u>treat my wound(s)</u> or someone else's wound(s). e. I need oil to <u>sustain</u> my spiritual life. f. I need oil to live <u>peacefully</u> with church members. g. I need <u>gladness and joy</u> in my spiritual life.
Dove	<p>Doves have many wonderful attributes that reflect God's Holy Spirit. To name a few: He brings faith to our hearts; He produces gentleness within through bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit; He leads us to the path of purity; He guides us to a meek and peace-filled life.</p> <p><i>Which attribute do you desire the most, and why?</i> <u>cleanliness</u> <u>faithfulness</u> <u>peace</u> <u>harmlessness</u> <u>gentleness</u></p>

Memory Verse

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." (Galatians 5:25)

Meaning

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we are submissive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We surrender our fleshly desires and give God our determination to walk according to His will.

Conclusion

By studying the symbols of the Holy Spirit, we can have a deeper understanding of the Holy Spirit and how He is related to us. The more we understand the Holy Spirit, the more we recognize the importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not only a guarantee of our heavenly inheritance, but also a Helper who teaches us and helps us overcome many difficulties in life (Jn 14:26). He can refine us, renew us, sanctify us, and give us the strength to work for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lesson 3 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. How do we know if we are living and walking in the Spirit?
When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we are submissive to the guidance of the Spirit. We surrender our fleshly desires and give God our determination to walk according to His will.
2. In what ways is the Holy Spirit like wind?
Just as breath sustains life, our soul cannot live without the Spirit of God. Like wind, the Spirit is invisible but still has force and strength, and we know that He is with us.
3. Name two purposes of oil and explain what this teaches us about the Holy Spirit.
 - a. *Anointing/sanctification – as God’s priests, we must be anointed with the oil of the Holy Spirit in order to serve Him.*
 - b. *Fuel for lamps – without the fuel of the Holy Spirit, we cannot radiate the light of God, nor can we ensure our lamps are filled so that we can enter the marriage feast to see our Lord.*
 - c. *Treating wounds – true healing can only be found in God.*
 - d. *Sustains lives – like the widow and Elisha living on flour and oil, the Holy Spirit sustains us, providing love and abundant grace.*
 - e. *Gladness – when we are filled with the Spirit, we will have joy.*
4. What do doves represent? Pick one characteristic and explain how it applies to the Holy Spirit.
 - a. *Cleanliness/purification – the Spirit purifies us and makes us clean in God’s eyes.*
 - b. *Faithfulness – the Spirit helps us to remain faithful to God.*
 - c. *Peace and reconciliation – only through the Holy Spirit can we be truly at peace with God and with men.*
 - d. *Harmlessness/gentleness – the Spirit is never harmful but teaches us to be gentle.*
5. What areas in your spiritual life are “dry” or “cold,” and in need of the rain of the Holy Spirit?
Personal answers.
6. What will you do this week in order to be filled by the Holy Spirit, so that God’s word can take root?
Personal answers.