

The Holy Spirit



STUDY NOTES

Breath, Wind, Spirit, & Mind

Get ready to clear your throat and enjoy reading through some excerpts of scripture! Where you see the words **spirit, wind, or breath** in bold, say “*ruakh*” instead for Old Testament passages or, for New Testament passages, say “pneuma.”

The first time God’s Spirit appears in the Bible is on Page 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. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.



GENESIS 1:1–3

1 | Breath

The first and most basic meaning in the Hebrew Bible for *ruakh* is “breath.” The invisible life-energy that you breath in and out is actually God’s gift to humanity.

Then Yahweh God formed Adam of dirt from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the **breath** of life; and man became an animated being.

...as long as I have life within me, the **breath** of God in my nostrils...

When you die, and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the **spirit** returns to God who gave it.

If God decided to take back his **spirit/breath** and gather his **breath** back to himself, all mortal creatures would expire and humanity would return to the dirt.

GENESIS 2:7

JOB 27:3

ECCLESIASTES 12:7

JOB 34:14-15

2 | Wind

Wind is an invisible power that animates humans (breath) and all creation. God's presence appearing is often connected to wind.

Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the **wind** rose, a heavy rain started falling and Ahab rode off to Jezreel.

1 KINGS 18:45

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden **in the wind** of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

GENESIS 3:8

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east **wind** and turned it into dry land."

EXODUS 14:21

Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind (pnoe) came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting... and they were all filled with the **Holy Spirit** (pneuma).

ACTS 2:2, 4

Ruakh is an invisible energy that animates things and makes them move. God's *Ruakh* is animating everything.

3 | Spirit

Spirit is the invisible, life-animating energy of God that is present in his creation, sustaining all life.

If you hide your face [from any creature], they are dismayed when you take away their **breath**, they die and they return to the dirt.

When you send forth your **spirit/breath** they are created, and you revitalize the surface of the ground.

PSALM 104:29-30

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, their starry host by the **breath of his mouth**.

PSALM 33:6



4 | Mind

This usage concerns a frame of mind, or conscious purpose.

Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose **spirit** is no deceit.”

PSALM 32:2

Do not be quickly provoked in your **spirit**, for anger resides in the lap of fools.

ECCLESIASTES 7:9

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast **spirit** within me.

PSALM 51:10

Activities of God’s *Ruakh*

1 | God’s *ruakh* can ‘enter’ human beings in order to influence and empower them by enabling their human abilities with divine enhancement.

Who was the first spirit-empowered person in the Bible? Joseph! Pharaoh elevates him to a position of authority because he is “... one in whom is the **spirit** of God.” The second? Bezalel.

GENESIS 41:38

See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the **Spirit** of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge, and with all kinds of skills – to make artistic designs...

EXODUS 31:2

When the people rebelled in the wilderness, Moses wished that God would send his Spirit on all of God’s people.

If only all the Lord’s people were prophets, that the Lord would put His **Spirit** upon them!

NUMBERS 11:29

God’s Spirit empowers rulers to be wise, powerful, and perform acts of salvation.

Now Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the **spirit** of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him.

DEUTERONOMY 34:9

In the Book of Judges, God’s Spirit comes upon tribal rulers like Othniel, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson despite some of them having terrible character flaws). God’s *Ruakh* empowers prophets to speak on God’s behalf.

On the other hand I am filled with power,
With the **Spirit** of the Lord,
And with justice and courage,
To make known to Jacob his rebellious act,
Even to Israel his sin.

MICAH 3:8

2 | When the Biblical authors look forward to the fulfillment of God’s promises in the new creation, they envision a world permeated with the spirit of God.

The Messiah will come to rule and be empowered by the Spirit:

Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,
And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.
The **Spirit** of the Lord will rest on Him,
The **spirit** of wisdom and understanding,
The **spirit** of counsel and strength,
The **spirit** of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

ISAIAH 11:1–2

When Ezekiel envisioned how the transformation of rebellious Israel would take place, he envisioned a new creation act—new humans by way of God’s Spirit.

Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new **spirit** within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. “I will put My **Spirit** within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

EZEKIEL 36:26–27

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast **spirit** within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy **Spirit** from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing **spirit**, to sustain me.

PSALM 51:10–12

The hand of the Lord was upon me, and He brought me out by the **Spirit** of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones... Thus says the Lord God to these bones, “Behold, I will cause **breath** to enter you that you may come to life. I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin and put **breath** in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am the Lord.” So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And I looked, and behold, sinews were on them, and flesh grew and skin covered them; but there was no **breath** in them. Then He said to me, “Prophesy 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 come to life.’” So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the **breath** came into them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

EZEKIEL 37



Summary of Old Testament Usage

1 | Spirit of Creative Life

God's *ruakh* is the invisible, personal presence of the creator God that animates and sustains all creation.

- God's *ruakh* is associated with the wind, an invisible powerful energy.
- Creator *ruakh*: Living creatures have borrowed *ruakh*, invisible life-energy that sustains their existence; when they die their *ruakh* goes back to the creator.

2 | Spirit of Empowering Presence.

- The Spirit can enhance or use a person's own thoughts, abilities, and purposes to accomplish God's purposes.
- The Spirit "comes upon" someone to do God's will: Bezalel, Gideon, Samson, Saul, David, *etc.*
- The Spirit influences someone's mind so that what they speak is what God wants people to hear, *e.g.*, the prophets.

SEE MICAH 3:8

3 | Spirit of New Creation

Just as God created through his Spirit, so God's future purposes to restore all things will also take place through the work of his Spirit.

- The messianic king is empowered by the Spirit.
- The new covenant people of God are transformed by God's Spirit in such a major way that only the language of "new creation" is adequate.
- The Spirit will be "poured out" to bring about the flourishing of creation itself.

SEE ISAIAH 11

SEE EZEKIEL 36, 37

SEE ISAIAH 32:15



The Spirit in the New Testament

1 | Jesus' origins are traced to the creative work of the Spirit.

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.

MATTHEW 1:18

Jesus' baptism is a deliberate recall of Genesis 1:2.

When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

LUKE 3:21-22

The Gospel of Luke highlights more than any other gospel the role of the Spirit in empowering Jesus and his mission.

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness.

LUKE 4:1

At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, "I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants."

LUKE 10:21

2 | Jesus' resurrection was the new-creation work of the Spirit.

God's Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, by the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord."

ROMANS 1:3-4

Jesus' resurrection life of the Spirit was then passed onto his followers.

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

JOHN 20:21-22



3 | In Acts, the coming of the Spirit is equated with the arrival of God's temple presence.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.

ACTS 2:1-3

In Acts, the Spirit and Jesus are nearly identical, guiding and directing the followers of Jesus.

While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

ACTS 13:2

They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them.

ACTS 16:6-7



4 | In Paul's letters, the Holy Spirit is equated with the presence of God and the presence of Jesus.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the *koinonia* of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

2 CORINTHIANS 13:10

For Paul, the Spirit brings the divine resurrection life of Jesus into the life of his followers.

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

ROMANS 8:11

The Spirit is the very life of God joined to humanity, and so through human suffering and anguish over the pain of the world, God's own Spirit prays to God himself.

In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

ROMANS 8:26–27

God gives gifts to his followers through the Spirit to empower them for ministry.

But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:11

The Spirit is bringing about new creation in the lives of Jesus' followers, producing new 'fruit.'

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

GALATIANS 5:22–25



Discussion Questions

- 1 | Does thinking of God as breath, wind, or animating energy depersonalize God or make God seem closer and more intimate with us?
- 2 | Consider Acts 16:6–7. Where, if at all, might one draw a line between Jesus and the Holy Spirit?
- 3 | Why does God partner with us to create life through the invisible means of the Spirit rather than through more empirical means?
- 4 | Does God's Spirit only hone innate talents and abilities within us so that we can serve God, or does God's Spirit grant us entirely new talents and abilities that we previously did not have?
- 5 | Is it possible to resist God's Spirit? If so, how? If not, where does human free will come in?
- 6 | In what ways is God's Spirit specifically working through you and your faith community today to create life within the New Creation?