

ADAM HAMILTON

Author of Creed, Wrestling with Doubt, and The Message of Jesus



THE
HOLY
SPIRIT

GOD'S PRESENCE AND POWER
AT WORK IN US

ADAM HAMILTON

Author of *Creed*, *Wrestling with Doubt*, and *The Message of Jesus*

THE
HOLY
SPIRIT

GOD'S PRESENCE AND POWER
AT WORK IN US

Abingdon Press | Nashville

Copyright© by Abingdon Press. All rights reserved.

THE HOLY SPIRIT
GOD'S PRESENCE AND POWER AT WORK IN US

Copyright © 2026 Adam Hamilton
All rights reserved.

No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted by the 1976 Copyright Act, the 1998 Digital Millennium Copyright Act, or in writing from the publisher. Requests for permission can be addressed to Rights and Permissions, The United Methodist Publishing House, 810 12th Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37203-4704 or emailed to permissions@abingdonpress.com.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2026932357
978-1-7910-4456-5

Scripture quotations are taken from the Common English Bible, copyright 2011. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked KJV are from The Authorized (King James) Version. Rights in the Authorized Version in the United Kingdom are vested in the Crown. Reproduced by permission of the Crown's patentee, Cambridge University Press.

Scripture quotations marked NRSV are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. <http://nrsvbibles.org/>.

Continued on page vi.

*For all who desire
a deeper understanding of and
openness to the work of
the Holy Spirit in their lives.*

Continued from page iv.

Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

Cover description: a deep red background gradually brightens toward the center with a warm glow of yellow and orange. Near the top, the author’s name, Adam Hamilton, appears in gold lettering. Below it is a white dove in flight, wings spread, surrounded by stylized flames in shades of red, orange, and yellow, suggesting fire and movement. Centered beneath the image, the title, *The Holy Spirit*, appears in large white letters. At the bottom, the subtitle, *God’s Presence and Power at Work in Us*, is shown in smaller gold text.

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CONTENTS

Introduction	ix
Chapter One: The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament: God's Creative, Powerful Force at Work in Us	1
Chapter Two: The Holy Spirit in Matthew, Mark, and Luke: Baptism with the Holy Spirit and Fire	25
Chapter Three: The Holy Spirit in John: The Advocate, Comforter, Counselor	49
Chapter Four: The Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles: Pentecost, Power, Tongues, and the Leading of the Spirit.	69
Chapter Five: The Holy Spirit in the Epistles of Paul: Gifts, Fruit, and Daily Life in the Spirit.	105
Notes	142

Chapter One

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

GOD'S CREATIVE, POWERFUL FORCE AT WORK IN US

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.

(Genesis 1:1-2 NIV)

Then Moses said to the Israelites, "See, the LORD has chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills."

(Exodus 35:30-32 NIV)

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Samson went down to Timnah together with his father and mother. As they approached the vineyards of Timnah, suddenly a young lion came roaring toward him. The Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon him so that he tore the lion apart with his bare hands.

(Judges 14:5-6 NIV)

So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David.

(1 Samuel 16:13 NIV)

Several years ago, I bought my wife a battery-operated leaf blower for Christmas. I know, very romantic! But she did ask for it. After doing my research, I bought her an EGO 650 leaf blower. This amazing tool can move 650 cubic feet of air a minute. That's enough air to fill a fifteen-foot U-Haul truck in about seventy seconds. It does this by blowing air at 180 miles per hour—that's the force of a Category 5 hurricane. This thing's got potential.

But if you go to buy one on Amazon, be sure to pay attention. You can buy it with or without a battery. If you go for the cheap version, without the 56-volt lithium-ion 5.0 Ah battery, do you know how many cubic feet per minute it blows? Exactly ZERO! Without the battery, it is a useless piece of plastic. GET THE BATTERY!

Throughout Scripture, the Spirit of God is a source of power that enables us to do more than we could do on our own. This is what Jesus told his disciples before ascending to heaven, “You will receive *power* when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (Acts 1:8; emphasis added). We’ll learn more about the power of the Holy Spirit in each of the chapters that follow.

We begin our study of the Holy Spirit by turning to the Hebrew Bible, the Christian Old Testament. Many Christians assume the Old Testament has little to teach us about the Holy Spirit, believing the Holy Spirit sprang onto the scene on the Day of Pentecost, shortly after Jesus ascended to heaven. As we’ll see, the foundation for much of what the New Testament reveals about the Holy Spirit is found throughout the Old Testament, along with a few insights into the Spirit we don’t find in the New Testament. An entire book could be written on the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. Think of this chapter as an overview and introduction to this important topic.

A Jewish Understanding of the Spirit

The Hebrew word for “spirit” is *ruach* (or *ruah*). It has a variety of meanings, including breath, wind, and spirit. And when it means spirit, it can mean our human spirit, an evil spirit, or God’s spirit. The word appears nearly four hundred times in the Old Testament, and of these at least seventy, perhaps more, relate to the Spirit of God.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

How does the Bible translator decide whether *ruach* means breath, wind, or spirit? And, if spirit, when is the reference to God's Spirit? Usually, the context in which the word appears makes this clear, but sometimes the context leaves room for multiple possible translations. Take for example the opening words of the Bible where *ruach* appears for the first time. In The New International Version (NIV), Genesis 1:1-2 reads:

*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 [ruach]** of God was hovering over the waters (emphasis added).*

But the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) translates the same Hebrew words in this way:

*In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while **a wind [ruach]** from God swept over the face of the waters (emphasis added).*

The difference between the two translations reflects the debate among scholars. If the NIV is correct, then the Spirit of God was hovering over the primordial chaos, preparing it, some even say incubating it, for the moment when God would say, "Let there be light!" as God brought order to the chaos. If *ruach* here means wind, it may carry the same sense of preparing, even

cooling, the superheated earth so that it could sustain life. As wind, it foreshadows the wind that would split the sea as the Israelites were escaping slavery in Egypt.

Perhaps we don't have to choose. The ambiguity in how *ruach* is to be translated may point to an intentional ambiguity in the Hebrew Bible about the precise nature of the Spirit. Christians conceive of the Spirit as God, of the same essence or divine "stuff" as the Father and the Son, yet somehow distinct from the Father and the Son. The Spirit is, for lack of a better word, a "person." The word *person* is used in a technical sense in trinitarian theology to signify the differences and unique identity of the Father, Son, and Spirit, while they share one divine substance (*ousia* in Greek). Consequently, in the New Testament, "Spirit" is capitalized when referring to God, as it is a name for the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. We'll talk more about the Trinity in chapter 2.

The authors of the Hebrew Scriptures did not conceive of the Spirit in trinitarian terms. Jewish readers of the Bible do not see the spirit as a distinct person within a triune God, but as an attribute, aspect, or dimension of God. Therefore, "spirit" is not capitalized in the Jewish Scriptures. It is not a proper name but rather a descriptive term conveying how God works or a dimension of God's being

It has become common in mainline Christian versions of the Old Testament not to use a capital *S* in "spirit of God" in

THE HOLY SPIRIT

recognition of the intention of the original authors who, again, were not using spirit as a name to refer to a trinitarian person, but rather a dimension of God. You'll see that in the various translations of verses I cite in this chapter. In the Old Testament, the NRSV and the Common English Bible (CEB) use "spirit," while the NIV translation capitalizes, preferring "Spirit." The former are trying to be true to the author's intent; the latter is reading the Old Testament through the lens of Christian theology.

I recently spoke with two rabbis in the Reform tradition of Judaism about how they conceive of the spirit of God in the Hebrew Bible. Rabbi Stephanie Kramer describes the spirit (or *ruach*) of God as God's presence, power, and creativity that comes upon humans to enable ordinary people to do extraordinary things in service to God and others. She describes the spirit as a powerful force, like a gust of wind acting upon people or things.

The spirit of God gives gifts to artists, strength to warriors, prophetic messages to the prophets, and wisdom and power for leaders to lead. Such gifts are breathed into people not unlike the Bible's account of God breathing life into the first human (Genesis 2:7). This is the meaning of the word *inspire*—the Latin means "to breathe into" or "blow upon." The *ruach* of God is God's wind, God's breath, God's spirit. And Rabbi Kramer notes that the spirit imbues ordinary people with extraordinary power.

Rabbi Art Nemitoff describes the spirit as an aspect, quality, or emanation of God, just as someone might speak of you and describe some aspect of you—your humor or empathy or intellect—or your spirit. He sees the spirit as “God’s immanent presence . . . and the manifestation of God’s power and influence, the aspect of God that inspires.” He also notes that when he reads of the spirit in Scripture, he tends to see this “poetically or metaphorically, as God’s presence in human experience.”

Both rabbis capture ways of thinking about the Holy Spirit that are very much like how Christians conceive of the Holy Spirit’s work and influence in, on, and through us. In the rest of this chapter, let’s look at some of the stories of the Spirit’s work in the Old Testament. (As an aside, in this chapter, when quoting the CEB or NRSV, or when referring to a strictly Jewish understanding of the spirit, I will use the uncapitalized word, but when reading or describing the Spirit from a Christian perspective on the Old Testament, I will capitalize the word.)

The Creative Power of God

In Exodus 31, as Moses prepared to build a portable sanctuary for God, we read of God’s choice of an artisan to help with the design and crafting of many of the furnishings of the tabernacle. God’s choice was a man whom he had filled with the “divine spirit” (the *ruach elohim*, perhaps better translated, “the spirit of God”):

THE HOLY SPIRIT

*The LORD spoke to Moses: Look, I have chosen Bezalel, Uri's son and Hur's grandson from the tribe of Judah. **I have filled him with the divine spirit**, with skill, ability, and knowledge for every kind of work. He will be able to create designs; do metalwork in gold, silver, and copper; cut stones for setting; carve wood; and do every kind of work.*

(Exodus 31:1-5; emphasis added)

Some read this passage to mean that Bezalel was suddenly filled with the Spirit of God and was now able to act as a skilled master craftsman for the tabernacle. But it seems more likely to me that God was saying to Moses that these gifts that Bezalel already possessed were in fact a result of God having previously filled him with the Spirit. Perhaps Bezalel had these talents from his childhood and cultivated and honed them for years. I want you to notice that whenever these aptitudes, skills, or abilities came, they were ultimately gifts from the Holy Spirit. This is akin to the spiritual gifts Paul writes about in Romans and 1 Corinthians.

When I think about Bezalel's gifts, skills, or aptitudes, I am reminded of others throughout history who likewise possessed remarkable gifts, including child prodigies such as Mozart, the great eighteenth-century composer who, by the time he was eight, had composed his first symphony and, in his short life (he died at the age of thirty-five), composed over eight hundred works. Mozart's father described his son's abilities as "a miracle, which God has allowed to see the light in Salzburg." He saw it

as his duty “to convince the world of this miracle.”¹ How does one explain such remarkable gifts?

When in the past I saw a professional athlete—after scoring a touchdown or a game-winning goal, hitting a grand-slam home run, or pitching a no-hitter—point to heaven, it used to give me pause. Were they saying that God had just intervened to allow them to score? Or to beat their foes? But then I realized that most are simply saying, “I understand my ability to play, to do what I did, was a gift from God”—a gift of the Holy Spirit like that given to Bezalel. This attitude seems right to me, and in keeping with Psalm 115:1: “Not to us, LORD, not to us— / no, but to your own name give glory.”

When we come to see giftedness as a gift of the Holy Spirit, it should lead us to humility and to seek to give glory to God. And when such gifts are, ultimately, from the Holy Spirit, they are usually meant to be used for God’s purposes or glory. Bezalel may have been a gifted artist and craftsman his entire life, but suddenly, at the base of Mount Sinai, God effectively said, “Bezalel, it is for this purpose, for preparing my tabernacle, that I gave you these gifts so long ago.”

I wonder if you have any special gifts, aptitudes, or abilities that, upon reflection, you might see as gifts from the Holy Spirit? Can you sing? Are you skilled at baking? Do you play an instrument or easily learn foreign languages? Are you great with numbers or able to visualize things others cannot? Are you more

THE HOLY SPIRIT

compassionate than others or just a good listener? If you have any special gifts—think about it, since I’m sure you do even if you don’t consider them special—it is likely that they are gifts from the Holy Spirit and that God intends you to use them in some way for his purposes.

I’m reminded of Eric Liddell, the Scottish missionary and Olympic runner whose story was made into the 1981 film *Chariots of Fire*. In the film, he saw his ability to run as a gift from God, noting, “When I run, I feel His pleasure.”

The Spirit and Leadership

Sometime after the Israelites left Mount Sinai and began their long march through the Sinai desert, the people complained against Moses. And he cried out to God, “I can’t bear this people on my own. They’re too heavy for me” (Numbers 11:14). In response, God told Moses,

*Gather before me seventy men from Israel’s elders, whom you know as elders and officers of the people. Take them to the meeting tent, and let them stand there with you. Then I’ll descend and speak with you there. I’ll take some of the **spirit [ruach]** that is on you and place it on them. Then they will carry the burden of the people with you so that you won’t bear it alone.*

(Numbers 11:16-17; emphasis added)

Here we learn that Moses had been imbued with the Spirit in order to lead, and now God was going to imbue seventy

others with the same *ruach* so that they could lead. God's Spirit was giving them wisdom to lead and to do what they could not do on their own.

We see this again and again in Scripture. In Numbers 27, Joshua, who will serve as Moses' successor, is described by God as "a man who has the spirit [*ruach*]" (v. 18). In the Book of Judges, the Spirit is said to reside in or rush upon the great warrior leaders of ancient Israel. Judges 3:10-11 notes, "The LORD's spirit was in Othniel, and he led Israel. When he marched out for war, the LORD handed over Aram's King Cushan-rishathaim. Othniel overpowered Cushan-rishathaim, and the land was peaceful for forty years, until Othniel, Kenaz's son, died." It was the Spirit that gave Othniel the gifts to lead. And in Judges 6:34 we read, "The LORD's spirit came over Gideon, and he sounded the horn and summoned the Abiezrites to follow him." The Hebrew word for "came over" is a word that is also used for putting clothing on. Gideon was "clothed" by the Spirit with leadership gifts.

Here we learn that leadership as God intended it—pursuing God's purposes—requires gifts given by the Holy Spirit. For those of you who are church leaders, you need the Spirit's power, courage, and gifts if you are to be as effective as God wants you to be. Your leadership depends on your embrace of the Spirit and the Spirit's gifts. How do you access such leadership gifts? You ask and seek and open yourself to the work of the Spirit. I pray every morning for the Holy Spirit to fill me, lead me, use me, and equip me for the day so that I can lead.

Courage and Superhuman Strength

Among Israel's greatest warrior-judges was Samson. He would lead the Israelites for twenty years. Soon after we first meet Samson, we read that, as he was entering the village of Timnah, a young lion roared and prepared to attack him. Judges 14:6 reports, "The Lord's spirit rushed over him, and he tore the lion apart with his bare hands." In that moment, the Spirit filled Samson with courage and extraordinary strength. Three times we read of this superhuman strength and courage coming upon Samson, a strength that allowed him to defeat Israel's enemies and to lead the people for twenty years.

I've never torn apart a lion with my bare hands, but there have been times in my life when I felt God gave me courage to take risks, or to speak up, or to go places I might otherwise have been too afraid to go, to do things I would otherwise have been afraid to do. Fear plays such a huge part in our lives and often keeps us from doing many things God would have us do.

Sometimes our fear is pursuing a new job, or moving to a new town, or taking some risk that God is calling us to take for some purpose greater than ourselves. It may be a calling to serve in a ministry with people or in a place that is outside our comfort zone.

I remember a petite woman in our congregation, in her early fifties at the time, who heard about the need for volunteers in a nearby prison. She felt God was calling her, but she was

anxious and afraid. The Spirit gave her courage to step outside her comfort zone. As she went, she found her life transformed by serving with the inmates. She came to see her volunteering to befriend prisoners as one of the most important things she'd done with her life. I am convinced it was the Spirit who both called her and filled her with courage to pursue this ministry.

I think of the thousands of members in the church I serve who, having spent years living in the suburbs, in neighborhoods whose promise is great schools and low crime rates, feel compelled to serve in some of the neighborhoods with the highest violent crime rates in our city. They go to read to children in the schools, or to coordinate support for teachers, or to deliver sacks with nutritious food to help stave off hunger over the weekend for the students, or to provide beds for children without them. Suburban life is often insular and fosters fear of parts of the city one never sees except in stories on the evening news. Yet the Holy Spirit compels them to go, and in the process of serving, they come to know people and communities, and their fears give way to peace and joy.

The same is true for our members who travel to the developing world. Many have never been outside of the United States. But at some point, they feel called by the Spirit to travel over eight thousand miles to the African country of Malawi or Uganda or another country they'd never been to before. They go to learn, to grow, to serve, and to be a part of the work God is

THE HOLY SPIRIT

doing through our brothers and sisters living in these places. The first time, nearly all go with trepidation, but they go nonetheless, and I believe it is the Spirit who fills them with courage.

“The Lord’s Spirit Speaks Through Me”

In the New Testament, Jesus tells his disciples that the Holy Spirit would give them the right words to say when called before magistrates. But this idea of the Spirit speaking to and through God’s people is seen throughout the Old Testament. In 2 Samuel, just before his death, David said, “The LORD’s spirit speaks through me; / his word is on my tongue” (2 Samuel 23:2). This is as it was with the prophets of God. God’s Spirit came upon them, covered them, filled them, and gave them the words to speak.

The prophet Jeremiah is sometimes described as the “weeping prophet.” He wept over God’s people because of their sin and obstinance and for the terrible things he foresaw in their future for their failure to repent and be obedient to God. He famously felt like giving up, but in Jeremiah 20:9 he expressed why he could not stop delivering the message: “If I say, ‘I will not mention him, / or speak any more in his name,’ / then within me there is something like a burning fire / shut up in my bones; / I am weary with holding it in, / and I cannot” (NRSV). The message and the fire shut up in his bones had the same source. They came from the Holy Spirit.

I've never taken the risks of Jeremiah, who was imprisoned for his message, but there have been times when I felt I had a message from God for the congregation I serve, but I knew I would receive unkind emails and letters and some would leave the church over it. In those times, when I preached these words, took this or that position, or stood on a street corner with a protest sign, I felt it was the Holy Spirit welling up in me. I wonder, when have you taken an unpopular position because you believe the Holy Spirit wanted you to say or do something in keeping with God's will?

The Spirit Is Constantly at Work All Around Us

I want to suggest that one way the Spirit works is to inspire and move us to action. The Spirit is God's presence at work all around us, in us, and through us. If this is true, then nearly everything the biblical authors tell us about God's promises and God's care is the work of the Spirit of God.

I think about Job, who, after all the tragedies he faced, offers these words: "God's *spirit* made me; / the Almighty's breath *enlivens me*" (Job 33:4, emphasis added). Or consider the words of the psalmist concerning God's presence, always near to us; there is nowhere we can go where the spirit of God is not:

*Where could I go to get away from your **spirit**?*

Where could I go to escape your presence?

THE HOLY SPIRIT

If I went up to heaven, you would be there.

If I went down to the grave, you would be there too!

If I could fly on the wings of dawn,

stopping to rest only on the far side of the ocean—

even there your hand would guide me;

even there your strong hand would hold me tight!

(Psalm 139:7-10; emphasis added)

I think of the powerful words of Isaiah to the Jewish community living in exile in Babylon as they prepared to return home,

Those who hope in the LORD

will renew their strength;

they will fly up on wings like eagles;

they will run and not be tired;

they will walk and not be weary.

(Isaiah 40:31)

How does God renew their strength? Help them to run and not grow tired? Is it not through the presence of his Spirit? And how do we access this renewing, empowering, soaring work of God's Spirit in our lives? Isaiah tells us to hope in the Lord—the Hebrew for “hope” here is *qavah*—to wait expectantly, trust in God, have faith. We trust in God, wait with hope for God's help when we are weak or weary or discouraged, and as we do, it is the Spirit who renews our strength.

Have you experienced God's presence when you felt alone or as though the world was crashing in? Were there moments

you felt you could not take one more step or do one more thing, but then you found yourself renewed and strengthened to do what needed to be done?

At the Church of the Resurrection, and many churches, our Christmas Eve candlelight services are our Super Bowl. We have so many who come that we start holding Christmas Eve services two nights before Christmas Eve to accommodate the crowds. One year, after preaching three services on the two nights before Christmas Eve, something I ate gave me food poisoning. I was up all night throwing up. I had no sleep and prepared for someone else to read my sermon, or thought that perhaps we should just play a recording from the previous night. That day, as people prayed for me, I felt an amazing strength fill me. Two of our doctors in the church checked me out and said I was dehydrated, so they hooked up an IV. That night, between the services, they would give me another bag of fluids. I preached services at 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11 p.m. and felt I could have preached several more by the time midnight rolled around. I ran and did not grow weary. I walked and did not faint. The IV helped, but I believe it was the Holy Spirit that gave me strength I should not have had.

I look back over my years of serving Resurrection. There were weeks when I would have two funerals, a wedding, multiple meetings and pastoral visits, and preach five or six times over the weekend. I was running on empty, but somehow there was

THE HOLY SPIRIT

always a strength that would seize me when I didn't think I could go any further. I learned to trust in God, to invite the Spirit to renew my strength so that I could run and not grow weary, walk and not faint. I am certain you have moments like this. And it is the Spirit of God that makes this possible.

Do Not Take Your Spirit from Me

There is a warning from Israel's history regarding the Holy Spirit that we might do well to remember. It is captured by the words of Job: "The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away" (Job 1:21; my paraphrase). Consider King Saul, in whom God placed his Spirit in order for Saul to lead the nation of Israel. But remember what happened to Saul when he sinned against God? God withdrew his Spirit from Saul. This was terrifying for Saul, for he knew he could not reign without the Spirit working in him. Ultimately, he fell.

Then his successor, King David, sinned against God and one of his most valiant warriors, Uriah, by sleeping with Uriah's wife. And when she became pregnant, to cover his sin, he had Uriah killed. When he realized what awful thing he had done, he pleaded with God, "Please don't throw me out of your presence; *please don't take your holy spirit away from me*" (Psalm 51:11; emphasis added). He begged God because he knew what would happen if God withdrew his Holy Spirit from him.

Imagine if God were to take the Spirit away from you? You may not be consciously aware of the Spirit's presence and work in your life, and that may be why you are reading this book. By now you've seen, I hope, that there are many ways in which the Spirit has been at work in your life, has bestowed on you gifts of wisdom and courage. What would happen to you if God withdrew his Spirit from you?

I love that God seems to have answered David's prayer, and after he had violated God and Uriah and Bathsheba, God showed mercy to David, just as he can show mercy to you and me when we sin, provided we come to him.

The Spirit and the "Still Small Voice"

Throughout the Scriptures, we read of God speaking to people. Often we read that "the Lord's word came to" Abraham or Moses or one of the prophets. How did God's word come to them? Did they hear an audible voice from God? Perhaps. But it seems most likely that it was a thought that seized them, a flash of inspiration or insight, or a deep sense of conviction they believed to be the voice of God. Sometimes, it is a whisper we hear in our hearts.

I'm reminded of the story of Elijah in 1 Kings 19, when Elijah had fled for his life as Queen Jezebel sought to kill him. He was depressed and wanted to die. He spent the night in a cave and then heard God tell him to go stand on the mountain

THE HOLY SPIRIT

while God himself would pass by. You likely remember the story. There came a strong wind, but God was not in the wind. And then an earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake. And then a fire, but God was not in the fire. Then, “After the fire, there was a sound. Thin. Quiet” (1 Kings 19:12c). The NRSV translates “Thin. Quiet” as “a sound of sheer silence,” while the NIV translates it “a gentle whisper,” and the King James famously has “a still small voice.” It was in the silence, in the gentle whisper, that Elijah experienced the presence of God.

It is in the silence that the Spirit often speaks to us.

The Spirit and the Promised Future King

As we prepare to transition to what Jesus said about the Holy Spirit, I’d remind you that there are prophetic words in the Hebrew Bible that foretold a special king that God would send Israel. Consider Isaiah 11:1-2:

*A shoot will grow up from the stump of Jesse;
a branch will sprout from his roots.
The LORD’s spirit will rest upon him,
a spirit of wisdom and understanding,
a spirit of planning and strength,
a spirit of knowledge and fear of the LORD.*

Notice what is said about the *ruach* that would rest upon the Messiah. It is a *ruach* of wisdom and understanding, of planning and strength, and of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. These

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

are all gifts of the Spirit that Israel's ideal king would need, and receive, as he was anointed with the Spirit.

And finally, consider the words of the prophet Isaiah that Jesus drew from when he began his ministry preaching in his hometown of Nazareth:

*The LORD God's spirit is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me.
He has sent me
to bring good news to the poor,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim release for captives,
and liberation for prisoners,
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor
and a day of vindication for our God,
to comfort all who mourn,
to provide for Zion's mourners,
to give them a crown in place of ashes,
oil of joy in place of mourning,
a mantle of praise in place of discouragement.
They will be called Oaks of Righteousness,
planted by the LORD to glorify himself.*
(Isaiah 61:1-3)

Jesus believed the Holy Spirit was at work in him and had sent him to bring good news to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted, and to release the captives. His ministry was permeated, empowered, and led by the Holy Spirit.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

“I Will Pour Out My Spirit on All Flesh”

The final text I'd like us to consider before leaving the Old Testament and its description of the Spirit is from Joel 2:28-29. There is disagreement as to when Joel was written, but many date it to the period after the exiles of Judah returned from Babylon, beginning in 538 BC. It speaks of swarms of locusts that destroyed all the crops. Similar devastation by locusts has occurred many times in the modern era. Joel's mention of this might have been metaphorical, with the locusts representing the armies that destroyed Judah in the past, or he may have been describing a literal plague of locusts that devastated the land.

Joel calls the people to fast and to seek God's help and then promises that God will, in fact, deliver them and restore the land. And then God makes this promise through the prophet Joel, saying,

*Then afterward
I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.
Even on the male and female slaves,
in those days, I will pour out my spirit.
(Joel 2:28-29 NRSV)*

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

The verb “to pour” has a sense of extravagance about it. In the past, the Spirit was often associated with prophets and kings, though not exclusively, but now God promises, all people will receive the Spirit of God. And the Spirit will lead all, not just prophets, to prophesy and to have dreams and visions.

All of this takes me back to the EGO 650 leaf blower. Used without a battery, the best you can hope for is to push a few leaves around. But insert a 56-volt lithium-ion 5.0 Ah battery, and you’ve got a hurricane in your hands. So it is with the Spirit. Watch out—anything is possible.

Always balanced, consistently faithful, inevitably pastoral, Adam Hamilton has the uncanny gift of embracing and encouraging many expressions of earnest faith. He does this in *The Holy Spirit*, in which he deftly blends Bible study with personal experiences to bring to light and life the vibrance and vitality of the Holy Spirit. A book well worth reading for Christians of any stripe.

—**Jack Levison**, W. J. A. Power Chair of Old Testament Interpretation and Biblical Hebrew, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University

The overlooked person of the Trinity gets center stage in Hamilton's insightful and imaginative study. Answer his invitation to experience the breadth and depth of how the Holy Spirit is portrayed in Scripture.

—**Karoline M. Lewis**, Professor and the Marbury E. Anderson Chair of Biblical Preaching, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota

Finally! I've lost count of the number of people over the years who have asked me to recommend a clear and comprehensive exploration of the Holy Spirit for personal or small group use. Adam Hamilton has provided just such a book. It is more than just a complete biblical overview of the third person of the Trinity. It is also a powerful, practical invitation for us to pay attention to the Spirit at work in and through us. This book should be read, studied, and applied!

—**Magrey R. deVega**, Senior Pastor, Hyde Park United Methodist Church, Tampa, Florida, and author of *Embracing the Uncertain: A Bible Study for Unsteady Times*



ADAM HAMILTON is senior pastor of The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in the Kansas City area, a vibrant congregation of more than 23,000 members and one of the nation's leading mainline churches. As a UMC pastor who came to faith in the Pentecostal tradition, Adam approaches the study of the Holy Spirit in light of both traditions. His books, which have sold more than three million copies, include *Why?*, *Making Sense of the Bible*, *When Christians Get it Wrong*, and *Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith*. Learn more at AdamHamilton.com.

 **Abingdon Press**[™]
Growing in Life, Serving in Faith

www.AbingdonPress.com

Cover Design: Marc Whitaker/MTWdesign.net

RELIGION / Christian Education / Adult

ISBN-13: 978-1-7910-4456-5



9 781791 044565