

The Holy Spirit as a Person

The main qualifications for being “a person” are:

You must have....

- a. A **mind** - able to think and act upon your thinking.
- b. Your own **will** - and self-identity.
- c. **Emotions** - reactions and awareness.

As human beings we all have these qualities. Another quality of being a “person” is that one has **life**. A “person” is identified as - *a self-conscious being, aware of its own existence and the existence of others who also have a self-identity*. Having a **will** indicates the ability to think and reason, while having a choice to **act**. These are things we associate with *self-consciousness* that is exclusive to “persons”. The **Holy Spirit** has all these qualities. We notice also that the Holy Spirit is the ‘executive’ of the Father. He is co-creator of the universe; the author of divine Scripture; the generator of Christ’s humanity; the regenerator of the believer; and the distributor of eternal life.

The Holy Spirit is identified as a Person by John, using (in the Greek) the masculine *ekeinos* in **John 16:13**. In the Bible, the Holy Spirit is presented as a personal being with a self-identity different from both the Father, and the Son. His main purpose is to come alongside the believer and to do what Jesus did when He was physically here - but mainly from the inside of us. He is called the **Comforter**; this would be a hard thing to do if the Holy Spirit is just an impersonal force. *Paracletos* (used for the Spirit by Jesus), is **Helper**, and this is almost always regarding living persons (coming alongside another).

Jesus is a “Person”, and if the Spirit is “**another Comforter**” this requires the Spirit to be a “person” also. How could He duplicate all the attributes and works of Jesus unless He is a person? Note, when we speak of “person” it does not necessitate form but rather personality and identity. Looking at the attributes of the Spirit we find no difference in His nature, function and communion with the believer than Jesus Christ. Romans 8:27, “**He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints.**” 1 Corinthians 12:11, “**But the one and the same Spirit works all these things dividing to each one as He wills.**” In Acts 8.29, when the Spirit spoke to Philip He said, “**Go to that chariot and stay near it.**” Revelation 2-3: “**Let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches.**” Revelation 22.17, **The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!”** If the Spirit is impersonal, then so is the Bride!

All the activities of the Spirit are descriptions of what “persons” do. Many groups come to the irrational and illogical conclusion that He is only a force used by the Father to accomplish His purposes. However, Romans 8.16 states, “**The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.**” To make the Holy Spirit something other than a **personality** is plain stupid. This means that we are in-dwelt with a divine non-entity. This means we have no divine nature - that all we are is a physical body (just like the evolutionists say). Note also, that Paul uses the word *pneuma* as the masculine pronoun “He”, clearly giving the Holy Spirit an identity. In the New Testament the Spirit is always portrayed as a “personal being” - with an identity different than both the Father and the Son.

Please understand that the **intrinsic nature** of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit has always been the same because they are all eternal. They all have in common the same divine essence, which is **God**. They also share in the divine name of God - *Yahweh*. All the attributes of God that are held in common with the Father and Son are shared also with the Holy Spirit. He has omni-presence. In Psalm 139:7-10 David writes, *whether he goes up to heaven or into hell below God is there, he cannot escape His Spirit*. He is ‘everywhere’ - since He dwells in every believer simultaneously. *Omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience* are all attributes of the **Godhead**. What’s more, the main characteristic of the Spirit is that He is omniscient - “all knowing”. 1 Corinthians 2:10-11 says, “**For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.**” Only God can comprehend God Himself - He knows the things of God and deep things we do not know of ourselves.

There are scriptures that refer to the Holy Spirit as being the “Spirit of Jesus”, the “Spirit of Christ”, or “Spirit of the Son” “the Spirit of the Father” If the Son and Father are “persons” then this certainly does not make the Spirit a non-person! In Hebrews 9:14 He is called the “eternal Spirit.” And because He is in us, the Scripture equates Him as ‘**God in us**’ (Romans 8:9-10, 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19, John 14:23, 15:4, 1 John 4:12-13, 15). Luke 12.12 says, “**For the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.**”

1 Corinthians 2.13: “**This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words**

taught by the Spirit,” How would this be possible without a language or communication skills.

Romans 8:27 tells us that He has a **mind** (proving He has a personality). Romans 15:30 says He has **love** - which only those with intelligence and personality express. Ephesians 4:30 tells us He gets **grieved**. Hebrews 10:29 says He can be **insulted** (and He can be blasphemed). Matthew 12:32 states that all sins committed against the Son will be forgiven but the sin against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. This certainly affirms He is neither a force nor a mere creature. Only eternal sins cannot be forgiven, which must refer to sins against the eternal God.

In John 16:7 Jesus says, **“But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.”** Not ‘it’ to you! The disciples were grieving, if the Spirit were an impersonal force he would no way comfort or replace a real person. Imagine saying to someone, **“Don’t worry, you’ll have the comfort of electricity or a force!”** John 14:26, and 1 Corinthians 2:13 both reveal that He **teaches** us. Galatians 5:18, Romans 8:9 say He is our **guide**. These are important functions of someone who is ‘alive’, with emotion and personal interaction. Romans 8:26-27 tells us that He **groans** along with us, and He **intercedes** for us to the Father (this gives Him personality and feelings). 1 Thessalonians 1:6 says He gives us **joy**. He also **hears** from the Father (John 16:13) and He is able to **testify** of the Son (John 15:26).

Furthermore, the Spirit’s role is to convince unbelievers of sin, righteousness and judgment, and this requires **intelligence**. The Spirit is also attributed to being the **author** of Holy Scripture, which gives Him great **communication skills** (also great intelligence). In Revelation 14:13 we find the Spirit **speaks** from heaven saying “write.” All these characteristics give personal identity to the Holy Spirit, which makes Him a **person** that is distinct from the Father and the Son.

To recap... The Holy Spirit is not a mere ‘symbol’ of anything.

No symbol or force is able to:

- **Communicate** ('speak') – Acts 13:2,
- **Intercede** (step in on behalf of someone) – Romans 8:26,
- **Testify** – John 15:26,
- **Guide** – John 16:13,
- **Command** – Acts 16:6,7,
- **Appoint** – Acts 20:28,
- **Lead** – Romans 8:14,
- **Reveal** to someone how wrong, foolish, or sinful he/she was – John 16:8,
- **Seal** God's promise in believers' hearts – Ephesians 1:13,14,
- **Shape** the life of each person and a community to Christ – Romans 8:1-17.

In the Bible, the Holy Spirit has **intellect**, **passions**, and **will**, and can be **grieved**. In short, the Spirit has a very *distinct personality*. The Holy Spirit can act in whatever manner He wants to act. However, the Spirit generally acts through a believer - yet He doesn't have to! The Spirit is free to not always be seriously focused on those purposes; the Spirit can *enjoy your company*. This is all stuff that can't be true of a mere (or even 'The') Force. As God, the Holy Spirit is *cause*, and that cause has effect. Yet, there are those in the Christian churches who reduce the Holy Spirit to a ‘force’, or to a living memory of the gathered believers - or merely the conscience within a person. Those people, fine as they may be, are describing a different spirit than the Holy Spirit as viewed by the Christian faith. The Spirit works in all of these ways and more. The Spirit works in whatever ways are needed to do what needs to be done. With one exception, He chooses never to take forceable control of people's actions - He only comes in by invitation.

Finally, Scripture shows clearly that the Holy Spirit is a “person” and that **He is God** :

- The Spirit's work in the Old Testament is closely identified with the Word of **Yahweh** and this was affirmed by the early church,
- The close ties between Jesus' mission and the work of the Spirit, and the close ties between the mission of the apostles and the work of the Spirit.
- The episode with Hananiah (Ananias) in Acts 5, where first, Peter says that Hananiah lied to the Holy Spirit, then later says that he lied not to men but to God.
- The trinitarian baptismal formula found in Scripture: **“in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”**. This dates to the church's earliest days.

Yes, the Holy Spirit is part of the Godhead but He is a **Person!**