

THE  
POWER  
OF THE  
HOLY  
SPIRIT'S  
NAMES



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# **INTRODUCTION**







The Holy Spirit is the most misunderstood, marginalized, misused, and underappreciated member of the Trinity. On the one hand, He's ignored, and on the other hand, He's illegitimately sensationalized. Both extremes cancel or limit His work in and through God's people. That's why it's important for us to not only know the Holy Spirit more but as He really is.

The Spirit has a central role in the life of the believer and the empowerment of the church, with the distinctive task of making the reality and truth of God experienced in both. And because He possesses emotions, intellect, and will, He is to be related to on a personal level. He's to be *known*, not merely considered a force or power to be manipulated or used. Although He's nonmaterial, intangible, and invisible, He is nonetheless real and relational.

As with the other two members of the Trinity, one of the best means to understand, appreciate, and benefit from the person of the Holy Spirit is to explore the names and attribute descriptions He's given in Scripture. They explain how He lives those roles in us, through us, and for us.

My first goal in this book, then, is to identify, explain, and illustrate the Holy Spirit and His work through those descriptions and names. By the way, while some of the Holy Spirit's names and descriptions are not always capitalized as proper nouns as I write—just as they aren't in Scripture or at least in some Bible translations or paraphrases—they are nevertheless as significant to our study as if they were.

A second goal is to show believers how to relate to the person of the Holy Spirit in a more personal and intimate way. And a third goal is to help us learn how to take full advantage of all the Spirit offers for our physical lives, our emotional lives, and most importantly, our spiritual lives. When we grasp how to do this, His availability can be maximized for our personal and collective growth and impact.

When we come to know the Spirit—again, not only more but as He really is—we can more intimately tap into the unique ways God reveals Himself to us. That's why we all need to understand that to the degree we take the person and work of the Holy Spirit seriously is the degree to which we will experience more of God.



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# THE HELPER







Just two months after my wife of nearly 50 years passed, I was scheduled to film a Bible study in Sedona, Arizona. In the years prior to her becoming ill, Lois and I had enjoyed traveling to various places around the country for me to film these studies. It gave us some much-needed time away in beautiful locations while also allowing me to work. I had come to look forward to these trips because she was with me.

But this journey would be different. This filming would be difficult. This act of faith, on my part, would take everything I had in me to carry out.

I'd counseled enough people over my four decades as a pastor to know I needed to go. I needed to follow the same advice I'd given to so many others over the years. I had to create new experiences that would enable me to heal during this time of grieving rather than get stuck in an emotional loop. But I'd also counseled enough people to know that doing so is never easy. And the full realization of this truth hit me as I walked down the airport corridor to catch my flight that very first time without Lois.

I walked alone. I pulled my luggage alone. My head hung down, and my heart joined it. And as I moved forward, I grew even more discouraged and depressed to the point that tears welled up in my eyes. I didn't want to go without her. I didn't want to "create new experiences" if Lois wasn't going to be in them. Nor did I feel like teaching on the Bible at that moment in time.

But I would soon find out that, even though I walked alone, I wasn't alone. The Holy Spirit was with me. And like the Holy Spirit knows to do, He met me right where I was with just what I needed to keep going.

As I walked slower and slower by the step, a middle-aged couple I'd never seen before approached me. I didn't know them at all but, as I found out later, they listened to me on the radio. And while people often approach me in airports to say hello or to tell me they listen to me on the radio, these two were different. They didn't say any of that at the start. They didn't tell me their story. They didn't ask for a photo. They simply asked if they could pray for me.

"Well," I answered, realizing they must have been sent by God, "sure."

They put their arms around me, and I put my arms around them. The woman began to weep, and the man began to pray. I'll never forget his words: "Lord, we believe You have led us to our brother today to pray for him. We don't believe we passed by here due to chance. Whatever help and comfort he needs, for whatever he's facing in light of what's happened and what he's going through, I pray that Your Spirit will lift him up and give that help and comfort to him right now."

The gentleman closed his prayer, and then the three of us hugged. After thanking them and hearing some of their kind words about listening to me preach over the years and their condolences for my late wife, Lois, I continued on my way filled with a greater strength than I'd had just moments before. I had driven to the airport completely down. I'd entered the airport terminal completely down. But the Holy Spirit knew I needed help, and at the right time and in the right place, He sent the right people to come and lift me up in prayer so I could keep going.

I was able to do the teaching in Sedona as planned. And while it was by far one of the more difficult things I've ever had to do, I found the subject of knowing God encouraging as I taught through it. In this space of great loss, as I remained obedient to Him despite the pain I was feeling, God peeled back the layers of pain and grief enough to help me see His presence in His Spirit like I needed to.

In fact, when I arrived at the hotel where I would be staying, a woman there encouraged me as well. An employee at the hotel, she overheard my name when I was about to check in, then personally greeted me, expressed her condolences, and let me know she would be praying for me too.

## **GOD SENDS THE HELPER**

The Holy Spirit knows what you need and when you need it, especially when you need it—and Him—the most. After all, we all face times when we're down, when we're in what I'll call a slump.

When baseball players run into a slump, they've entered an extended period of time when they're unable to hit the ball well. They show up game after game after game, following the prescribed routine, yet each time at the plate seems to nurture the self-fulfilling prophecy taking root in their minds. They ground out, pop up, or fly out over and over again. Worse, they might strike out. No matter how hard they try, they just can't manage a base hit let alone a home run. Sometimes they're even sent down to the minor leagues until they figure out how to overcome this slump.

Whether routine creates grooves so deep that they drag us into a mental rut or we experience what feels like debilitating pain, slumps happen to all of us. These are the times joy seems to be missing. When deliverance seems distant. When strength seems depleted. Maybe what you hoped would happen hasn't happened, at least not yet. You keep traipsing up to the plate, bat in hand, only to swing at the air, "striking out." You're just not connecting anymore with what matters.

Jesus knew we would all face spiritual slumps. He knew there would be days, weeks, or even years when His people would feel disconnected. He especially knew this would happen to His own band of close disciples when He was crucified and then left their physical presence. That's why He called them aside to meet with them in an upper, secluded room, where He talked about what He planned to do about it. He wanted to give them the tools to thrive even when He was no longer physically by their side.

Jesus also knew His disciples were sad. He could see it on their faces and hear it in their voices. That's why He began His conversation with calming words. "Do not let your heart be troubled," He assured them (John 14:1). He went on to talk about His leaving and to tell them He was going ahead to prepare a place for them.

Then Jesus introduced them to the person and work of the Holy Spirit. He said, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you" (John 14:16-17).

Jesus introduces the Holy Spirit to His disciples through the interesting phrase *another Helper*. We'll fully explore the Spirit's name Helper, but first let's look at the word *another*.

During that period in biblical culture, two common Greek terms were used when referencing another, but Jesus intentionally used the one indicative of a same, like manner—or similar kind. This was to emphasize the reality that even though He was leaving them, God was sending someone exactly like Him to help them through each upcoming day, week, month, and year. In being similar, He, the Holy Spirit, would bear all the attributes of deity Christ had as well.

The disciples weren't fully familiar with the concept of the Trinity at this time, so the introduction of the Holy Spirit probably caught them off guard. As I mentioned in the Introduction to this book, the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. God is a triune Being. He exists as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. While

existing as one God, He also consists of three co-equal persons who are one in essence while simultaneously distinct in role and personality.

I often illustrate this conceptually using a pretzel with three holes. The first hole is not the second hole. Neither is the second hole the third hole. But they are all tied together by the same dough. In other words, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit all share the same divine attributes and characteristics while not being the same in their personhood.

Similarly, we witness the three distinct persons of the Trinity each taking a more prominently visible role in the ongoing narrative of Scripture at different times. Using the analogy of a newspaper, in the Old Testament God the Father is on the front page. His is the voice we hear from the most, and His are the actions we see carried out the most. In the Gospels, Jesus is front-page news. He is the superstar. We see references to God the Father, but Jesus is “above the fold.”

Yet from the book of Acts onward, the Holy Spirit headlines. He’s the One we get to know the most as He works with and through individuals and churches to take the power of God, the person of Christ, and the priority of the gospel to the world.

Transitions are always hard, and an impending absence makes them all the more challenging. Jesus knew this. He knew what His disciples were about to experience. In telling them about the Holy Spirit, He was trying to soften the transition ahead. He sought to assure them that even though He would no longer be with them physically, in His absence God would send Someone of the same essence. Someone so similar to Him that they wouldn’t need to fear the gaping hole His leaving might produce.

Jesus even couched what He said in terms of endearment: “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:18).

Perhaps you know what it is to be an orphan. Or you know what it is to have parents who are absent emotionally or even to a large degree physically though not officially making you an orphan. You know what it is to grow up without the protection of parental covering and how vulnerable that leaves you to the wiles and lures of this world.

Jesus knew His disciples would feel abandoned when He left. They would feel as if they'd lost a parent or a coach or a guide. But He wanted them to know He wasn't leaving His followers in this evil, sick, sinful world to make it all on their own. He wasn't leaving them to the wolves. He would never do that to His disciples, nor would He ever do that to you and me. Rather, He left us all in the capable hands and heart of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit's role from that point forward was to act on Jesus' behalf just like Jesus acted on behalf of the Father when He walked on earth. He, the Holy Spirit, was sent to carry out the will of the Father and the Son among those who are saved. Just like each computer networked with others can read and interact with those others, the Father, Son, and Spirit, who all share the same divine nature, don't need to guess the will of the other two. Their awareness of one another's being and desires are innate within them as much as their awareness of their own beings and desires.

That's why you never have to worry whether the Spirit got the message when you've addressed your prayers to the Father. And you never have to wonder whether God heard, too, if you called out to Jesus. The triune God is so networked as one that they operate in sync at all times.

Yet just as the three distinct persons of the Trinity have unique roles to carry out, they also have unique characteristics—often highlighted or emphasized by “names”—that they demonstrate to us. And that finally brings us to the first name of the Holy Spirit we want to explore as found in Jesus' introduction of Him to His disciples—a name I'm sure you're familiar with, and the name I found I needed the most during the first years after my wife's passing: the Helper.

## **JESUS EXPLAINS**

Jesus calls the Spirit the Helper. And He calls Him this four times in three chapters in order to seed both the name and the concept of

His work and presence into the hearts and minds of His disciples as well as into ours.

I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper (John 14:16).

The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you (John 14:26).

When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me (John 15:26).

But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you (John 16:7).

Over and over again, we read that the Holy Spirit's role is that of a helper. The original word in Greek is *parakletos*. *Parakletos* is ripe with meaning, referencing one who is uniquely gifted to come alongside another and assist. When Jesus walked the earth, He came alongside the disciples to assist them in the various challenges they faced, even everyday challenges. For example, when they were hungry, He provided food. When they were tired, He gave them rest. And then when they experienced fear, He calmed their emotions. In moments of struggle, He gave them peace.

Whatever His disciples faced, Jesus provided assistance in facing it. But since He was leaving, they would no longer have His physical assistance nearby. Instead, they would have the help of the Holy Spirit.

Some English translations of Scripture don't use the word *Helper*. They use words like *Advocate* or *Comforter*. This is because the Greek term *parakletos* encompasses the Spirit's meeting all these "helping" needs, depending on the situation. God chose for the New Testament's inspired writers to define the Holy Spirit according to this particular

name because it can fit a variety of circumstances and needs. It's a flexible term, so fluid that it more accurately reflects the Holy Spirit's ability to help us in times of need.

If you're depressed, the Holy Spirit can help you with encouragement. If you're discouraged, He can help you with new strength. If you're afraid, He can help you by calming your fears. If you're struggling, He can even ease the struggle. And if you're alone, the Holy Spirit can be your friend. He can flex to whatever situation you're in and whatever you need.

In fact, you may need Him one way today but in an entirely other capacity tomorrow. And that's okay, because this name—Helper—applies to all situations. He is God's provision in Jesus' place to meet you at your point of need.

What's more, *parakletos* assumes there is a problem and so there exists a need for assistance. It starts with the question, *How can I help you?* It starts with proximity to the problem at hand. It starts with presence. Because you can't help anyone in any real capacity from a distance.

## YOU'RE NOT ALONE

The Helper Jesus introduces us to in this passage in the book of John is close enough to truly help when you need help the most. As we saw earlier in John 14:17, Jesus said, "You know Him because He abides with you and will be in you." The Holy Spirit is close enough to be with you in an experiential way. He is by your side, like a partner or a companion. Not only that, but He's also in you. This means the Holy Spirit walks *alongside* you while at the same time He makes His home *inside* you. And while you may feel alone at times in your life, this reality of the Holy Spirit's closeness to you both near and within means you're never truly alone.

Satan would like for you to forget that. He would like you to feel isolated and without help. And when you feel that way, it's easy to give up and lose hope. But when you remember the closeness of the helper

God has given you, you'll know you can get through anything life sends your way—without a doubt. You are not alone.

As a Christian, you have never been alone. From the moment you trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation from your sins, you received the companionship of the Holy Spirit both externally and internally. The reason He remains present in both locations is that, depending on the situation, you can need help in both areas of your life at the same time. Whether you're facing something in your external circumstances or struggling with internal thoughts or emotions, the Holy Spirit has positioned Himself to be available to you when and where you need Him the most.

## THE HELPER AS COMFORTER AND ADVOCATE

Earlier I mentioned a couple of forms of spiritual help the Holy Spirit offers us—again, both names coming from the flex term *para-kletos*: Advocate and Comforter. Let's talk about those.

The specific helping role I found myself needing from the Holy Spirit the most after losing my wife was that of Comforter. Not only did I feel alone in those early morning hours, sleepless nights, and evenings when the hands of the clock seemed to move so slow, but I needed comfort because of the pain I felt in my grief. I'm sure you've been in a situation where you needed this comfort as well.

Most of us have a cover we call a comforter on our beds, or at least close enough so it's available when we need it. A comforter is usually soft, somewhat weighted, and big enough to wrap ourselves in it completely, and it comes in handy particularly on a cold night or during a cold day. Comforters aren't used just when it's cold, though. I found myself using mine a lot after Lois's passing because I no longer had the physical warmth of her presence I'd come to know as second nature for nearly five decades. I needed a comforter every night in those first months, even if it wasn't cold.

The Holy Spirit as Comforter has come to give us the presence of God now that the presence of Jesus is no longer on earth. Whether we're going through a cold spell emotionally or spiritually—or even physically—the Comforter is close enough to reach out and wrap His presence around our hearts and souls in order to let us know we're not alone. Because Jesus has risen to the third heaven and no longer walks with us in the physical form on earth, the Holy Spirit has been assigned as a comforter for our times of loneliness and need.

Another name that can come from *parakletos* is *Advocate*. An advocate is someone who pleads your case—similar to what a defense lawyer does in a courtroom. When the Holy Spirit shows up as the Advocate in your life, He comes with the ability to defend you when accusations are made against you. He's there as an advocate for you when situations or circumstances stirred up by Satan are aimed at destroying you.

Legal advocates will always enter a legal system to intervene on behalf of the ones they're representing, and the Holy Spirit is no different. As the Advocate, He intervenes for us when we need Him to do just that.

## THE SPIRIT'S NATURE

As we will discover throughout our time together in this book, the Holy Spirit can intervene in so many different ways because He's a non-material Being. Jesus came to earth as a material, physical Being. While here, He could go to only certain places and do only certain things simply because of the physical limitations allowed. Yet because the Holy Spirit is nonmaterial, He can be in all places at all times. He can be helping you at the same time He's helping me. He can be speaking to you the same time He's speaking to me. He can be advocating for you the same time He's advocating for me.

The Holy Spirit, as the third person of the Trinity, is not an "it." He's not just a "power" to turn on and use, although we'll later see that power is one of His attributes. He's a person present both alongside

each of us and within us. And as a person, He desires for you to relate to Him as much as anyone else would want you to relate to them.

He also possesses intellect, emotion, and volition. He's not a robot where you get to push buttons and He obeys. He is not AI. The Holy Spirit exists as a relational Being formed of an immaterial essence in order to abide both with you and in you throughout your life.

One of the reasons we don't witness His help as much as we could is that we have relegated Him to robotic status. We've viewed Him as something to use, not Someone to know. If anyone in your life just wants to use you and clearly doesn't care about you, you know how your heart turns away from helping them. But that's often how we relate to the Holy Spirit.

We'll unpack how that affects His ability to help us in chapter 2, but my point here is that too often believers just want to use Him at will. And unless you and I truly understand and explore ways to relate to the Spirit and engage with Him, we will never fully experience the benefits He makes available to us.

The Holy Spirit can do so much. He can guide us. He can help us with our prayers. He brings things to our minds and helps us remember them. He teaches us. He convicts us. He strengthens us. He also searches the deep things of God and brings them to our awareness. And when He does, He can give us thoughts we weren't thinking on our own. He can give us ideas we didn't come up with on our own. He can make connections we never even knew to make or open doors we didn't even have the ability to knock on.

All of this takes place when we learn to "walk in the Spirit," as in an abiding relationship with Him.

## **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ABIDE WITH THE SPIRIT?**

The concept of abiding will come up in this book more than once, and I like to describe it by comparing it to drinking tea. Many of us

have only a “visiting” relationship with the Spirit; we call on Him only when we’re in trouble. When no problems are at hand, we don’t relate to Him ongoingly. But to abide is similar to letting your tea bag soak in boiled water. When the tea bag abides in the hot liquid, the water takes on the flavor and nature of the tea. Yet when someone simply dips their tea bag in and out of the water, as so many of us do in our relationship with the Spirit, the tea doesn’t have the opportunity to fully express itself in the water.

To abide with the Spirit means you’re hanging with Him. It means He’s involved in the totality of your life. You’re connecting with Him all the time. That’s why the Bible tells us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). It doesn’t mean we’re to get down on our knees and be in this physical posture of prayer at all times. Rather, it means we’re to bring the Spirit of God to bear in all we do. Whether we’re driving, working, shopping, or spending time with family or in entertainment, we’re to be conversing with the Holy Spirit (praying) at all times. We are to talk with the Holy Spirit always.

When we operate in this manner, we keep the channel open to hear from Him where we should go, what we should say and how, and what choices we should make. Whether it’s about a big matter or a small matter doesn’t matter.

If you’re serious about experiencing the work of the Spirit in the circumstances of your life, then it’ll involve your intentionally abiding with Him. That’s why Galatians 5:16 says we must “walk by the Spirit.” Walking, last I checked, is an action, not a passive activity done to you. In order to walk, you must choose to move. You must move your legs. You decide on a direction, and then you go.

Similarly, you don’t try to engage the Holy Spirit by passively acknowledging His presence. No, you are to walk with the Spirit. You are to move. You are to choose to connect with Him in an intentional way. And you go toward God by walking with the Spirit.

We will look at all that more closely in the pages to come, as well as

how we engage the Spirit, but it comes down to putting your weight on your spiritual legs and exercising your spiritual muscles.

Now, sure, your spiritual muscles may have weakened over long periods of time with no real use. But just as you must use atrophied or strained muscles or ligaments in physical therapy *and keep using them*, you must use your spiritual muscles *and keep using them*. Only in their continual use will you strengthen their connection in your spirit to the Holy Spirit placed in you by God.

Walking is never about just one step; it always involves steps following steps. To walk with the Spirit is no different. It isn't just about reading a Bible verse a day to keep the devil away. It's an ongoing movement toward God through steps taken to pursue the Spirit's presence in your life. When you do that, you'll unleash the Holy Spirit's power in you in ways you never even imagined. You will tap into the abundance of all the Holy Spirit can supply.

As we continue to walk through these pages together, be intentional about your pursuit to come to know the Spirit and the character traits He exudes. Don't set this time aside as the last thing you get to...and only if you feel like it. Make knowing the Holy Spirit a priority. Abide with Him. When you do, He will give you the strength and increase the motivation and desire in you to keep going. Your relationship with the Holy Spirit is a two-way connection—you with Him and Him with you. Move toward the Spirit and watch what He will do.