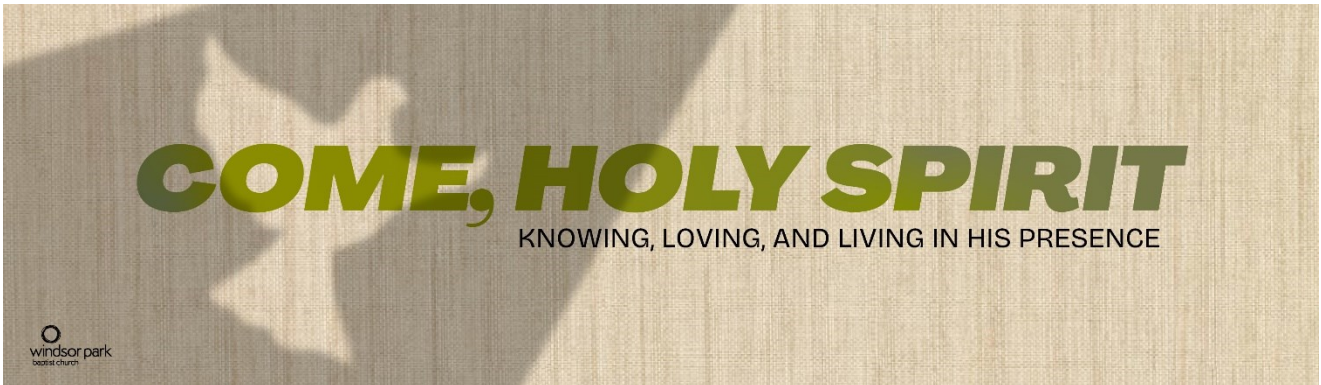


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Week 1: Pneumatology Is Worth The Effort

Key Idea:

In this opening message, we trace the work of the Holy Spirit across the entire story of Scripture — from creation in Genesis to the renewal of all things in Revelation. We explore how the Spirit brings life, empowers people, reveals God’s presence, transforms believers, and advances God’s mission throughout history, and then invites us to move from information to surrender — making room for the Spirit to speak, renew, guide, and empower us today.

Introduction: Anthropology and Pneumatology

I’ve often said that I’m a bit of a history nerd, but my interest in history usually stems from spiraling down some kind of rabbit hole to try and figure out how we as people have arrived at a certain point. I’m probably a closet anthropologist – **anthropology** being the study of humanity, culture, societies and behaviour over time. Interesting, right?!

Today we’re starting a little 6-week series looking at something else that is super interesting to many of us. We’re taking a quick dive into the subject of **pneumatology**, which I’m sure you’re fascinated by! Before you tune out because I’m using a word that is difficult to spell because silent ‘p’s are problematic, pneumatology is the branch of Christian thought dedicated to the study of the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Ghost if you’re a King James Version bible reader. The Holy Spirit/Ghost is the third person of the Trinity, and pneumatology is derived from the Greek words **pneuma** (meaning *breath*) and **logos** (meaning *the study of*), and so pneumatology looks at the who the Holy Spirit is and what He does.

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Series: Come Holy Spirit: Knowing, Loving, and Living by His Presence

Our series is called, **Come Holy Spirit: Knowing, Loving, and Living by His Presence**. For some of us this will be like a refresher, we've welcomed and been filled with the Holy Spirit over the course of our lives. This is foundational to Windsor Park as our Constitution (1.3.4) says that we believe in ***the person of the Holy Spirit as the one who sets apart, empowers, and imparts spiritual gifts to the church***. We are Holy Ghost livin', filled-to-overflowin' anointed by the Spirit people! Can I get an 'Amen' to that?!

But for others, the Holy Spirit can be bit of a mystery – when you hear us say that the Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force, but rather a person with intellect, emotions and will, who is fully God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son, intricately woven into regeneration (new birth), sanctification (transforming believers to be like Christ), illumination (understanding Scripture), and empowerment for mission, you're like, *'Yeah, I think Mum's calling!'*

And depending on how long we've been Christians and in what circles we've associated ourselves with, there are a range of experiences and teaching that can often cause 'discussions' to happen between us. I've been around long enough to see those discussions cause division and hurt people, which is a bad indictment on how we deal with some spiritual matters in the local church – in my opinion division about things of the Spirit is the opposite of anything to do with the Spirit. If you're in the hurt camp, I pray that this series might be healing and hopefully positive for us all.

Our hope is that this series will continue to shape us into being a Spirit-filled and God-honouring community - diverse, unified, and alive with God's presence, living out His love together. Over five different messages through to the end of June, we'll be looking at **The Spirit Promised, The Spirit Arriving, The Spirit of Love, The Gifts of the Spirit**, and what a **Spirit-Filled Community** might look like for us.

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Today, I get to do one of my favourite things by tracing the story of the Holy Spirit through the whole sweep of Scripture. So, brace yourselves – I’ve got 20 minutes to talk about something that some scholars spend their entire lives studying.

1. The Spirit in Creation

The first mention of the Spirit appears in the second verse of Genesis Chapter 1 where we read, ***“The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”*** We see the Holy Spirit is present before creation is fully formed, fully involved with the Father and the Son to bring order out of chaos and life out of emptiness.

In the second creation narrative in Genesis Chapter 2, Verse 7, we read, ***“The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”*** The Spirit is involved in creating humanity, giving breath and life and sustaining all living things, which is reinforced by the psalmist in Psalm 104 Verse 30 which says, ***“When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.”***

The Spirit’s earliest work is cosmic and creative.

2. The Spirit in the Patriarchs and Early Israel

From Genesis and then through the first five books of the Bible to Deuteronomy, we see the Spirit coming upon individuals for special purposes.

- **Joseph** receives wisdom through the Spirit in Genesis 41:38.
- **Bezalel** is described as being ***“filled with the Spirit of God”*** for artistic craftsmanship in building the tabernacle in Exodus 31:1–5. Bezalel would be a great name for tradies!
- **Moses** receives the Spirit for leadership in Numbers 11:25 and this is also given to the seventy elders with Moses.

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We can see that the Spirit comes upon selected people, temporarily. Spiritual gifts are given by the Spirit for wisdom, leadership, skill, and administration (thumbs up to administrators!).

3. The Spirit in the Judges

It's seldom talked about, but the Holy Spirit is then very much at work during the chaotic era of the judges. The Spirit comes upon **Othniel** in Judges 3:10; **Gideon** in Judges 6:34, **Jephthah** in Judges 11:29, and **Samson** in Judges Chapters 13 - 15. These encounters again represent temporary infusions of power rather than permanent spiritual transformation, aimed at delivering Israel from oppression as the Spirit gives military power, courage, strength, and again, leadership.

4. The Spirit in the Kings and Prophets

More talked about is the role of the Spirit in the lives of the kings. The Spirit comes upon **Saul** in 1 Samuel 10, empowering him to lead, but later departs because of his disobedience. In 1 Samuel 16:13, ***"The Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David"*** and **David** is heard praying in Psalm 51:11, ***"Do not take your Holy Spirit from me."***

5. The Prophetic Promise of a New Age of the Spirit

Things start to heat up as we move into the age of the prophets, who become uniquely associated with the Spirit as they start to reveal God's word, confront injustice, call Israel to repentance, and announce future hope.

The Old Testament begins to anticipate something radically new.

- **Isaiah** says that the coming Messiah will be Spirit-anointed, ***"The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him..."*** he says in Isaiah 11.
- **Ezekiel**, in prophesying a huge turning point, says in Chapter 36:27, ***"I will put my Spirit within you."*** And who can forget the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37 where the Spirit of the Lord breathes into a broken people and brings life where there was once death. Some of us know exactly what dry bones feel like.

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- **Joel** speaks perhaps the clearest and most revolutionary promise from the Father in Joel 2:28, ***“I will pour out my Spirit on all people.”***

You can't underestimate the significance of these shifts. The Spirit would no longer just be for prophets, kings, and leaders, but will be poured out on sons and daughters, the young and old, men and women. The Spirit will become universal among God's people.

6. The Holy Spirit and Jesus

And then we come to **Jesus**, who represents the fullest revelation of the Spirit up to that point. Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit in Luke 1:35, and the Spirit of God descends upon him like a dove in Matthew 3:16.

Jesus then announces in Luke 4:18, in quoting the words of the prophet Isaiah (Chapter 61), ***“The Spirit of the Lord is on me.”*** And of course the Spirit of God is integral to Jesus as he preaches, heals, casts out demons, performs miracles and announces the arrival of the kingdom of God.

Jesus introduces a deeper intimacy with the Spirit, telling those around him that the Spirit will teach, comfort, guide, convict, empower, and remain permanently with those who allow the Spirit space in their lives. Jesus calls the Spirit an advocate, a helper, and a comforter, and who can forget Jesus' words in John 14:26, ***“But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”***

7. Pentecost: The Great Turning Point

And then ... the day that gets more attention than most days. The day of Pentecost in Acts Chapter 2 is one of the most significant moments in the entire Bible as the promised Spirit is permanently and personally poured out on all believers wherever they are. Peter explicitly says that Joel's prophecy is fulfilled.

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What we then see is that the Spirit empowers the church for mission, boldness, unity, evangelism, and discernment and we see specific events of the Spirit directing **Philip, Peter, Paul, Barnabas, and the early church.**

8. The Holy Spirit in the Epistles

From the letter to the Romans through to the end of Jude, the New Testament letters then explain the practice of what Spirit-filled living looks like. Big themes are explored as we see how the Spirit regenerates, adopts believers into God's family, seals believers and gives the assurance of God with us.

We see how the Spirit transforms character as we grow into displaying the fruit of the Spirit. A non-exclusive list is given in Galatians Chapter 5 as to what this looks like: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

The New Testament writers detail lists of spiritual gifts that the Spirit expressly gives to people in the church as believers become, ***"The temple of the Holy Spirit."*** This is a massive theological shift as God's presence no longer resides primarily in a building, but in His people.

9. The Spirit in Revelation and the New Creation

And then, phew, we get to the easy part – the book of Revelation. The Spirit remains active until the very end as He speaks to the churches, repeatedly saying, ***"Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says..."*** as the Spirit warns, encourages, and helps sustain faithfulness. Near the end of the Bible, we read in Revelation 22:17, ***"The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.'"*** We see that the Spirit's final role is to call humanity to Jesus, preparing creation for renewal and participating in the completion of God's redemption story.

The Big Picture: How the Spirit's Work Progresses Through Scripture

Crickey, that's a lot! It's a big story, a supernatural story; this is the story of the Father's interaction with His created world through the giving of His Son, Jesus, made known to us by the presence of the Holy Spirit through all of time. God in three persons, blessed trinity!

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In this [quick] sweep of the entire Bible we have seen:

- **From Creation → New Creation:** The Spirit begins by bringing life to creation and ends by renewing all creation.
- **From Selective → Universal:** In the Old Testament the Spirit is given to specific individuals, but in the New Testament the Spirit is given to all believers.
- **From External → Internal:** Under the Old Covenant the Spirit comes *upon* people, but under the New Covenant the Spirit dwells *within* people.
- **From Temporary → Permanent:** The Spirit once came for moments and missions, but now the Spirit permanently indwells believers.
- **From National → Global:** The Spirit was initially focused largely on Israel, but at Pentecost the Spirit empowers a worldwide mission.

Here's a [hopefully] simple summary: The Holy Spirit moves through the Bible as God's life-giving presence — creating, empowering, revealing, convicting, transforming, indwelling, gifting, guiding, and ultimately renewing all things through Jesus Christ.

If there is one theme that unites all this together, it's this: the Spirit of God breathes life. He **breathes life** into creation, He **breathes life** into defeated people, and He **breathes life** into all those who surrender themselves to God's transforming work.

Over the last few years, I've come to experience some of the most powerful reminders of the Spirit of God with me. Not all the time, but there have been enough times when I have become so completely overwhelmed with a supernatural sense of gratitude to the God I invited to be a serious part of my life over three decades ago. I'm still learning and still growing into how the Spirit leads and transforms me, and I'm grateful to be in a community of faith that is still open to where God is leading us after 75 years of actively discerning the wisdom of the Spirit.

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Application

No matter if you feel that you understand some aspects of the Spirit of God, or whether you're coming into this fresh and you're young in faith, the challenge for us all is to move beyond seeing the Holy Spirit as a vague force or a theological concept, and instead recognise Him as God's personal presence - active, empowering, and available today. This same Spirit who created the world, empowered leaders, and raised Christ from the dead, now lives in us.

Maybe the invitation for us in this series is not simply to learn more about the Holy Spirit, or not to simply talk about the Holy Spirit. Maybe the invitation is to make more room for the Spirit of God, because when you trace the Spirit through Scripture, you discover that the Holy Spirit has always moved toward people — bringing life where there was emptiness, hope where there was despair, and renewal where things had grown dry.

The Spirit who hovered over creation, the Spirit who filled the prophets, the Spirit who empowered Jesus, the Spirit poured out at Pentecost, is the same Spirit still at work today. Still speaking, still comforting, still convicting, still healing, still transforming people into the likeness of Jesus.

Maybe today, what we need most is not more information, but fresh surrender. Perhaps we could all pray words like:

“Holy Spirit, speak to me.”

“Holy Spirit, change me.”

“Holy Spirit, renew me.”

“Holy Spirit, use me.”

The Spirit of God is with us, still breathing life into people who are open to receiving. May that be us, for the sake of the kingdom of God, and for the glory of God.

Amen.

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Reflecting on Sunday 10th May 2026:

Last Sunday was Mother's Day and Pastor Holly Walton encouraged us to think about the images that lead us closer to God. What have you thought about over the last week and how have you developed a more expansive view of how God reveals Himself to you.

The following questions help you think more about this message. We hope they might be a conduit for conversation and reflection, encouraging us to wrestle with how this message might practically work itself out in our lives.

- What stood out to you most as we traced the Holy Spirit's work through the Bible, and why?
- Why do you think the Holy Spirit can sometimes feel mysterious, confusing, or even divisive within the church?
- How can we become a Spirit-filled community that is both unified and gracious?
- The message described the Spirit as moving from "external to internal" and from "temporary to permanent." What does it mean to you personally that the Holy Spirit dwells within believers today?
- The message ended with the invitation to make more room for the Holy Spirit. What might that look like practically in your life right now

If you'd like to chat with someone about your spiritual journey or anything else going on in your life, please contact us at care@windsorpark.org.nz; **we're better together** and **no perfect people are allowed.**

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Below are some further resources that may take the message further and deeper and enable you to explore other viewpoints on the same theme. We also encourage you to engage with the preacher if there are further questions you have or if you'd like clarification on anything. Email info@windsorpark.org.nz and we'll direct your query to the appropriate person.

1. **The Bible Project** have some excellent resources that further describe the Holy Spirit. You can check them out here: <https://bibleproject.com/guides/holy-spirit/>
2. Everyone remembers Billy Graham – the most influential evangelist of the modern era who preached the Gospel to nearly 215 million people in more than 185 countries. Here's an article from him that unpacks **Who Is The Holy Spirit?** <https://billygraham.org/articles/who-is-the-holy-spirit>
3. The fruit of the Spirit is an often talked about part of Christian life. Here's an article called **How to Recognise the Holy Spirit: Nine Tests For Spiritual Fruit**, that talks about the fruit of the Spirit and how we might recognise it in our lives:
<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/how-to-recognize-the-holy-spirit>