

# Questions and Answers

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## Trinity Series

When we believe, we receive the Holy Spirit, but can or would the Holy Spirit leave us during our life on earth for any reason?

I don't believe so. Jesus says he stays with us by his Holy Spirit.

**John 14:18 – I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.**

**Ephesians 1:13-14 says we are “sealed” with the Holy Spirit.** He is our guarantee for our eternal inheritance. All believers have the Holy Spirit. God does not leave us. But there is much debate around whether we can leave God. A short answer is more helpful here: Hebrews contains many warnings for us not to fall away – not to renounce God, not to leave him, not to forsake him. There are no warnings about God leaving us. He never would. Plenty of warnings about us leaving him. One thing Hebrews does make clear is that God will never leave us. But also that it is incredibly difficult, some say even impossible, for us to leave him. To put it another way, it seems so incredibly difficult for us to cast the Holy Spirit out from our lives, that if we did, you would wonder if we could have been a believer to begin with. What child would push away the perfect loving Father who offers an eternal inheritance? Even if we were deceived to do so, the Father's grip is so tight, and he is such a great defender, it would seem against all odds to be able to loosen ourselves from his loving grip, unless we were never in it to begin with. Some people believe you CAN fall away, although it's unbelievably difficult. Others say you cannot. But one thing is clear: God would never leave us. It is us who would leave him, if that were possible!

Why don't we hear about the Holy Spirit when we learn about God the Father and Jesus, Saviour and Lord?

Easy answer: we should! Jesus should always be the focus. Always. He is the one we are pointed to for salvation and forgiveness. The lack of teaching on the Holy Spirit is sometimes out of a desire not to draw too much attention to him and hence draw attention away from Jesus. But often, this caution is taken too far! We should hear about the Spirit's work alongside the Father and Son. But the person of the Son should always receive greater attention as he is the one sent to relate to us as humans. I'd encourage you to read about the Holy Spirit, and apart from the Bible, one book you could start with is “Keep in step with the Spirit” by J I Packer.

Did Bruce say that a difference in the Trinity is the "order" they are revealed? Isn't the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament? Right from creation in Genesis 1:2 and with prophets being filled with the Spirit of God.

Extended answer:

“When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me.<sup>27</sup>And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.(John 15:26-27)

The Holy Spirit is certainly present in the Old Testament, as in Genesis 1:2 – and many other places, such as the way he speaks through the prophets who are filled with the Spirit, such as Othniel the judge in Judges 3:10 –

10The Spirit of the Lord came on him, so that he became Israel’s judge and went to war.

(see also last week’s Q and A for other OT references to the Holy Spirit). Some say Jesus is present in the Old Testament too! Many believe that the angel Jacob wrestled with was actually Jesus, and the Son of Man (Jesus ) appears in the visions of Daniel, for example (Daniel 7:13). So the Spirit and the Son were always there. But the Revelation of God (capital “R”) is more about the plan of how God reveals his salvation to humanity over history (known as “Salvation History”). Here’s one example of a snapshot of salvation history:

1: God creates. As Father, Son and Holy Spirit. “Let us make man in our image” (Genesis 1:26)

2: As Father, God calls Israel to be his people and reveals himself as their God, and Father. In Deuteronomy 1:31 for example – “the Lord your God carried you as a Father carries his son”. He personally CALLS mankind to himself, revealing himself as a Father.

3: As the Son, God comes into our world, revealing himself to us in human flesh. Hebrew 1:1-3 is a great summary of this revelation. He personally lives WITH us in flesh. That’s the next step of his salvation plan.

4: As Spirit, God reveals himself as our Counsellor. He personally lives IN us.

5: As Son, again, he will return as judge, and bring his children home. End of salvation plan.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are revealed to us in a special way in that order, through God’s plan of salvation – his history of Revelation.

**Short answer: (long answer is above - online)**

The difference we see in the Trinity is the way they are revealed to us on earth in God's plan of salvation. The Son and Spirit are always there, but they are revealed, in that order, in a special way on earth for God's plan of salvation. First, God reveals himself on earth to us in flesh in the person of Jesus. Sent by the Father. (John 20:21). Jesus was always there from the beginning because he is God. But 2000 years ago, he proceeded to earth and revealed himself to us as God in flesh. He proceeded here. Lived here. Revealed in flesh. Then left. Part of God's plan of salvation revealed. NEXT, the Spirit of God proceeds from the Father and the Son to reveal the next step of God's salvation plan by personally living in us by his Spirit (John 15:26). The Spirit does appear in the Old Testament. Like with the prophets and judges. But not in the personal and permanent way he appears on earth at Pentecost. At Pentecost (Acts 2), he proceeded to earth, and lived here, in us. And stayed. Revealed as part of God's salvation plan. It's like the difference between living somewhere and visiting somewhere. I've visited China but I've lived in Australia. The Holy Spirit visited in the Old Testament, but after Jesus, he revealed himself to us by living in us.