

# **Dr. Robert A. Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 1, The Holy Spirit is a Person**

## **Resources from NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

### **1. Abstract of Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 1, The Holy Spirit is a Person, Biblicalelearning.org**

Dr. Robert Peterson's lecture, "The Holy Spirit is a Person," initiates a course on the Holy Spirit and union with Christ by establishing the Holy Spirit's personhood. He asserts this through scriptural evidence, highlighting the Spirit's personal traits like intelligence, volition, and emotion. Peterson further argues for the Spirit's personality by detailing the personal ministries he performs, such as teaching and interceding, and by illustrating how the Spirit can be personally affected through actions like grieving and being lied to. The lecture contrasts this understanding with the notion of the Spirit as a mere force, emphasizing the relational aspect believers have with the Holy Spirit, including knowing and having fellowship with him. Peterson sets the stage for subsequent sessions by defining union with Christ in a Trinitarian context, where the Holy Spirit plays a crucial role in applying salvation by joining believers to Christ. He also briefly mentions various theological works that explore the doctrine of union with Christ.

**2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 1 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Theology → Theology, Peterson → Holy Spirit and Union with Christ).**



Peterson\_HolySpirit  
\_Session01.mp3

### 3. Briefing Document: Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 1, The Holy Spirit is a Person

#### Briefing Document: The Holy Spirit is a Person

**Overview:** This document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Robert A. Peterson in the first session of his teaching on the Holy Spirit and Union with Christ. This initial session focuses on establishing the personhood of the Holy Spirit as a foundational understanding for the subsequent exploration of union with Christ.

#### Main Themes:

1. **The Significance of the Holy Spirit for Understanding Union with Christ:** Dr. Peterson emphasizes that comprehending the doctrine of union with Christ necessitates a prior understanding of God, particularly the Holy Spirit and his ministries. He states, "to understand it, we need first of all to think about God, the Holy Spirit, and his ministries." The course will proceed by covering the person and deity of the Holy Spirit, his works (especially in salvation as joining people to Christ), and then delve into the biblical foundations and theological implications of union with Christ.
2. **Defining Union with Christ in a Trinitarian Context:** Peterson offers a preliminary definition of union with Christ rooted in the Trinitarian nature of salvation: "Salvation is planned by God, accomplished by God, and applied by God." He elaborates that the Father plans salvation, the Son accomplishes it through his incarnation, death, and resurrection, and the Holy Spirit applies it to God's people throughout history. He concludes that "union with Christ" is another way to describe this application of salvation, where believers are spiritually joined to the Son and gain all his saving benefits. He summarizes this: "a brief definition of union with Christ is the powerful work of God, the Holy Spirit, in joining the people of God, chosen by God, redeemed by the Son, in actually connecting those people to Christ in salvation, linking them to him, and uniting them. The Spirit unites believers."
3. **The Holy Spirit as a Person, Not an Impersonal Force:** The central argument of this session is that the Holy Spirit is a distinct person within the Trinity, not merely an impersonal force or power of God. Peterson provides extensive scriptural evidence to support this claim, categorizing it into three main points:

- **The Spirit has personal traits or qualities:** This includes intelligence, volition (will), and emotion.
  - **Intelligence:** Evidenced by the Spirit teaching (John 14:26), guiding into truth (John 16:13), and knowing the depths of God (1 Corinthians 2:10-11). Peterson quotes 1 Corinthians 2:11: "For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God."
  - **Volition:** Demonstrated by the Spirit sovereignly apportioning spiritual gifts according to his will (1 Corinthians 12:11). Peterson quotes, "all these gifts are empowered by one and the same Spirit, right, who apportions to each one, believer, individually as he wills."
  - **Emotion:** Illustrated by the command not to grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30). Peterson emphasizes, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God..."
  - **The Spirit performs personal ministries:** These are actions that only a person can undertake, such as taking Jesus' place as "another helper" (paraclete) (John 14:16), continuing Jesus' teaching (John 15:26), glorifying Jesus (John 16:14), convicting sinners (John 16:8), praying for believers (Romans 8:26), assuring believers of their sonship (Romans 8:16), and giving life (2 Corinthians 3:6). Peterson states, "These are ministries that only persons perform. Only a person takes Jesus' place. Only a person continues his teaching and teaches about Jesus. Only a person glorifies Jesus. Only a person convicts sinners..."
  - **The Spirit is affected as a person:** Scripture describes the Spirit being the recipient of actions that can only be directed towards a person, such as being blasphemed (Mark 3:29), lied to (Acts 5:3), tested (Acts 5:9), resisted (Acts 7:51), grieved (Ephesians 4:30), quenched (1 Thessalonians 5:19), and insulted (Hebrews 10:29). Regarding the account in Acts, Peterson quotes Peter's question to Ananias: "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" He also highlights the warning in Hebrews 10:29 about those who "have outraged the spirit of grace."
1. **The Spirit is Knowable and We Have Fellowship with Him:** Dr. Peterson highlights Jesus' statement in John 14:17, "You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you," arguing that one can only "know" a person, not an impersonal force. He also emphasizes the Trinitarian blessing in 2 Corinthians 13:13 (or 14), specifically mentioning "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit," asserting that fellowship is a relational concept that requires personhood.

### Important Ideas and Facts:

- The course aims to explore the doctrine of "union with Christ" in detail.
- Understanding the Holy Spirit is a crucial first step in grasping union with Christ.
- Salvation is a Trinitarian work: planned by the Father, accomplished by the Son, and applied by the Holy Spirit.
- Union with Christ is presented as the application of salvation, facilitated by the Holy Spirit.
- Dr. Peterson briefly reviews several key books on union with Christ, highlighting their contributions and approaches.
- He emphasizes the wonderful yet bewildering nature of union with Christ, quoting Richard Gaffin on its mysterious depths.
- The session provides numerous scriptural references to support the Holy Spirit's personhood.
- Peterson addresses and corrects a mistranslation in the ESV regarding the Holy Spirit as the sealer in Ephesians 4:30, clarifying the Trinitarian roles in sealing.

### Quotes:

- "Union with Christ is a most wonderful and perplexing doctrine, and to understand it, we need first of all to think about God, the Holy Spirit, and his ministries."
- "a brief definition of union with Christ is the powerful work of God, the Holy Spirit, in joining the people of God, chosen by God, redeemed by the Son, in actually connecting those people to Christ in salvation, linking them to him, and uniting them. The Spirit unites believers."
- "The primary, central, and fundamental reality of salvation is our union with Jesus Christ, because of which all the benefits of the Savior flow to us, and through which union all these benefits are to be understood. The most basic of all saving truths is the union God the Father forges between the believer and his Son, Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. To put it plainly, to be saved is to be united to the Savior." (quoting Marcus Johnson)
- "certainly in its full dimensions, this mystery of union is beyond the believer's comprehension." (quoting Richard Gaffin)

- "Scripture presents the Spirit as a person, not an impersonal force."
- "For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father... speaking through you." (Matthew 10:20)
- "...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 have said to you." (John 14:26)
- "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth..." (John 16:13)
- "For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God." (1 Corinthians 2:10)
- "...all these gifts are empowered by one and the same Spirit, right, who apportions to each one, believer, individually as he wills." (1 Corinthians 12:11)
- "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God..." (Ephesians 4:30)
- "I will ask the Father, and he'll give you another helper to be with you forever, even the spirit of truth..." (John 14:16-17)
- "...the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." (2 Corinthians 13:13/14)
- "You know him, for he is with you and will be in you." (John 14:17)

**Next Steps:** The subsequent session will likely delve into the deity of the Holy Spirit, further building the foundational understanding for the doctrine of union with Christ.

## 4. Study Guide: Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 1, The Holy Spirit is a Person

### Study Guide: The Holy Spirit is a Person

#### Key Concepts

- **Union with Christ:** The powerful work of the Holy Spirit in joining believers to Jesus Christ, through which they receive all of his saving benefits. This union is planned by the Father, accomplished by the Son, and applied by the Holy Spirit.
- **Personality of the Holy Spirit:** The biblical teaching that the Holy Spirit is not merely an impersonal force but possesses the attributes and performs the actions of a person.
- **Personal Traits:** Qualities inherent in personhood, specifically intelligence (the ability to think and know), volition (the ability to will and choose), and emotion (the capacity to feel).
- **Personal Ministries:** Actions that only a person can perform, such as teaching, guiding, convicting, praying, taking someone's place, and glorifying another.
- **Being Affected as a Person:** The capacity to experience personal responses and treatment, such as being grieved, lied to, resisted, or insulted.
- **Trinitarian Nature of Salvation:** The understanding that salvation is the work of the triune God, with each person of the Trinity playing a distinct and essential role (Father planning, Son accomplishing, Holy Spirit applying).
- **Application of Salvation:** The work of the Holy Spirit in making the benefits of Christ's redemptive work effective in the lives of believers, including regeneration, calling, faith, repentance, justification, adoption, sanctification, and perseverance.
- **Paraclete (Helper/Counselor/Advocate):** A title for the Holy Spirit, signifying his role as Jesus' successor and ongoing presence with believers.
- **Seal of the Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit given to believers as a guarantee and mark of their union with Christ and future redemption.

#### Quiz

1. According to Peterson, what is a brief definition of union with Christ?

2. What are the three personal traits of the Holy Spirit that Scripture ascribes to him? Provide a brief example of one of these traits from the source material.
3. Describe one personal ministry of the Holy Spirit mentioned by Peterson and explain why it demonstrates his personhood.
4. Give two examples from the text of how the Holy Spirit is "affected as a person."
5. Why does the fact that the Holy Spirit is called the "Helper" (Paraclete) point to his personality?
6. Explain the Trinitarian perspective on the "sealing" of believers as discussed in the lecture.
7. How does the Holy Spirit continue Jesus' ministry after his ascension, according to the text?
8. What does Peterson mean when he says that believers can "grieve" or "quench" the Holy Spirit?
9. Why is the personal nature of the Holy Spirit important for understanding our relationship with God?
10. In 2 Corinthians 13:14, what aspect of the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the benediction, and why is this significant for understanding his personhood?

### **Quiz Answer Key**

1. A brief definition of union with Christ is the powerful work of God, the Holy Spirit, in joining the people of God, chosen by God and redeemed by the Son, by actually connecting those people to Christ in salvation, linking them to him, and uniting them. The Spirit unites believers, allowing them to gain all of Christ's saving benefits.
2. The three personal traits of the Holy Spirit are intelligence, volition (will), and emotion. For example, the Spirit demonstrates intelligence by teaching believers all things and bringing to their remembrance all that Jesus had said (John 14:26).
3. One personal ministry of the Holy Spirit is taking Jesus' place as the "Helper" or "Paraclete." This demonstrates his personhood because only a person can act as another's representative, continuing their work and providing similar support and guidance.

4. Two examples of how the Holy Spirit is "affected as a person" are that he can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30) by the sinful actions and speech of believers, and he can be lied to, as seen in the account of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:3).
5. The fact that the Holy Spirit is called the "Helper" (Paraclete) points to his personality because this role involves understanding, comforting, guiding, and even prosecuting – actions that require personal agency, intelligence, and the ability to relate to others in a meaningful way.
6. The sealing of believers is a Trinitarian function where the Father is the sealer, and the Holy Spirit is the seal itself, with believers being sealed *in* union with Christ. The Holy Spirit acts as a guarantee and mark of their belonging to God and their future redemption.
7. The Holy Spirit continues Jesus' ministry by taking his place as the Helper, teaching believers all things, bringing Jesus' words to remembrance, guiding them into all truth, bearing witness about Jesus, and glorifying him. These are all roles that Jesus himself performed during his earthly ministry.
8. To "grieve" the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30) means to emotionally wound him through sinful behavior, particularly sinful anger and speech. To "quench" the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19) refers to suppressing or hindering his work and influence in the lives of believers, often through unbelief or rejecting spiritual gifts.
9. The personal nature of the Holy Spirit is crucial for understanding our relationship with God because it establishes that our interaction with the Spirit is not with an impersonal force but with a divine person who possesses intellect, will, and emotions. This allows for genuine relationship, fellowship, and the experience of his comfort, guidance, and conviction.
10. In 2 Corinthians 13:14, the "fellowship of the Holy Spirit" is mentioned in the benediction. This is significant for understanding his personhood because fellowship is an activity that can only occur between persons, involving mutual participation, sharing, and relationship.



## Essay Format Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the Holy Spirit's personal traits (intelligence, volition, and emotion) for understanding his role in applying salvation and fostering union with Christ.
2. Analyze the various "personal ministries" of the Holy Spirit presented in the lecture and explain how each of these functions demonstrates his distinct personhood within the Trinity.
3. Examine the implications of the Holy Spirit being "affected as a person" (e.g., being grieved, lied to, resisted) for the believer's relationship with God and the understanding of God's covenantal interactions with humanity.
4. Drawing on the material presented, articulate why the biblical portrayal of the Holy Spirit as a person, rather than an impersonal force, is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the Trinity and the application of salvation.
5. Explore the connection between the Holy Spirit's personality and the concept of "fellowship" with him, as highlighted in 2 Corinthians 13:14 and other passages, and discuss the practical implications of this fellowship for Christian life.

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Deity of the Holy Spirit:** The doctrine that the Holy Spirit is fully God, possessing all the attributes and nature of God the Father and God the Son.
- **Election:** God's sovereign choice before the creation of the world of those whom he would save.
- **Incarnation:** The act by which the eternal Son of God took on human flesh in the person of Jesus Christ.
- **Redemptive-Historical Approach:** An interpretive method that understands the Bible as a progressive unfolding of God's plan of redemption throughout history.
- **Regeneration:** The work of the Holy Spirit in giving new spiritual life to those who are dead in sin, enabling them to believe in Jesus Christ.
- **Sanctification:** The ongoing process by which believers are made holy and conformed to the image of Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.
- **Justification:** God's declaration that a sinner is righteous in his sight, based on the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ received through faith.
- **Adoption:** God's act of bringing believers into his family as his children, granting them all the rights and privileges of sonship.
- **Perseverance of the Saints:** The doctrine that all those who are truly born again will be kept by God's power and will persevere in faith until the end.
- **Synoptic Gospels:** The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which share a similar perspective and content in their accounts of Jesus' life and ministry.
- **Systematic Theology:** A discipline of Christian theology that aims to arrange and categorize religious truths into an internally consistent system.
- **Exegesis:** The critical interpretation and explanation of a text, especially of sacred scripture.
- **Atonement:** Christ's sacrificial death on the cross, which satisfied God's justice and reconciled humanity to God.
- **Profaned:** Treated something holy with irreverence or disrespect.
- **Benediction:** A concluding blessing, often invoking God's favor and grace.

## 5. FAQs on Peterson, Christ's Saving Work, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 1, The Holy Spirit is a Person, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions: The Holy Spirit as a Person and the Foundation of Union with Christ

#### 1. What is "union with Christ" and why is understanding the Holy Spirit crucial to this doctrine?

Union with Christ is the powerful work of God, the Holy Spirit, in joining God's chosen people, redeemed by the Son, into a living connection with Christ in salvation. This union is how believers receive all the saving benefits of Christ. Understanding the Holy Spirit is foundational because He is the "prime mover" in bringing about this union, linking believers to Jesus and bestowing His saving benefits upon them.

#### 2. How does Dr. Peterson define salvation in a Trinitarian context?

Dr. Peterson explains that salvation is planned by God the Father before creation, accomplished by God the Son through His incarnation, sinless life, death, and resurrection in the first century, and applied by God the Holy Spirit to believers throughout history in their individual lives. This application includes regeneration, calling, faith, repentance, justification, adoption, sanctification, and perseverance, all of which occur in union with Christ.

#### 3. What biblical evidence suggests that the Holy Spirit is a person and not just an impersonal force?

The Scriptures demonstrate the Holy Spirit's personhood through several key aspects:

- **Personal Traits:** The Spirit possesses intelligence (teaching, reminding, guiding into truth - John 14:26, 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:11), volition (distributing gifts as He wills - 1 Corinthians 12:11), and emotions (can be grieved - Ephesians 4:30).
- **Personal Ministries:** The Spirit performs actions only a person can do, such as taking Jesus' place as the Helper (John 14:16), continuing Jesus' teaching and bearing witness about Him (John 15:26), glorifying Jesus (John 16:14), convicting the world of sin (John 16:8), praying for believers (Romans 8:26), assuring believers of their adoption (Romans 8:16), and giving life (2 Corinthians 3:6).

- **Being Affected as a Person:** The Spirit can be blasphemed (Mark 3:29), lied to (Acts 5:3), tested (Acts 5:9), resisted (Acts 7:51), grieved (Ephesians 4:30), quenched (1 Thessalonians 5:19), and insulted (Hebrews 10:29).

#### **4. Can you explain the significance of the Holy Spirit as the "Helper" (Paraclete) mentioned by Jesus?**

The term "Helper" (Paraclete) signifies that the Holy Spirit takes Jesus' place after His ascension. This role is multifaceted: He acts as a defense attorney (1 John 2:2), a prosecuting attorney (John 16:8-11), and generally as one who comes alongside to aid and comfort. By sending "another Helper," Jesus indicates that the Spirit would continue His work and ministry in a new and powerful way after Pentecost.

#### **5. How does the Holy Spirit connect believers to Christ and what are the immediate benefits of this connection?**

The Holy Spirit connects believers to the living Christ, spiritually joining them to Him. Through this union, believers gain all of Christ's saving benefits. Dr. Peterson summarizes this by stating that when God joins us spiritually to His Son, we receive justification, calling, repentance, faith, adoption, sanctification, and all other aspects of salvation. This union is the foundational reality through which all the benefits of the Savior flow to believers.

#### **6. Why does Dr. Peterson describe the doctrine of "union with Christ" as both wonderful and bewildering?**

The doctrine is considered wonderful because it highlights the primary, central, and fundamental reality of salvation – our intimate connection with Jesus Christ, through whom we receive all saving graces. It's bewildering because the full dimensions of this union, including how believers share in the divine life (without becoming divine themselves, maintaining the creator-creature distinction), surpass human comprehension. It involves a knowledge of Christ's love that exceeds intellectual understanding.

#### **7. What are some of the key books mentioned in the lecture that further explore the doctrine of union with Christ?**

Dr. Peterson highlights several significant works:

- *All Things Made New* by Lewis Smead: A foundational work taking a redemptive-historical approach to a neglected doctrine.

- *Imputation and Impartation* by William Evans: Explores John Calvin's doctrine of union with Christ and its historical reception.
- *Being in Christ* by Hans Berger: A biblical and systematic investigation from a Reformed perspective, engaging with figures like John Owen and Herman Bavinck.
- *Union with Christ in Scripture, History, and Theology* by Robert Letham: A concise yet insightful overview covering various aspects of the doctrine.
- *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* by J. Todd Billings: Focuses on the practical implications of union with Christ for theology and ministry.
- *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* by Constantine Campbell: Considered the most outstanding book on Paul's understanding of union with Christ.
- *One with Christ* by Marcus Johnson: An evangelical theology of salvation emphasizing union with Christ and its benefits.
- *Union with Christ in the New Testament* by Grant MacAskill: A scholarly and wide-ranging study comparing different Christian traditions.
- *Salvation Applied by the Spirit, Union with Christ* by Robert Peterson: An attempt to summarize and treat union with Christ across the entire Bible.

## **8. How does the concept of the Holy Spirit as a person with whom we can have fellowship impact our understanding of the Christian life?**

Understanding the Holy Spirit as a divine person with whom we can have fellowship enriches our understanding of the Christian life significantly. It moves beyond seeing the Spirit as a mere force to recognizing Him as an active participant in our relationship with God. We can experience His grace, love, and communion, just as we do with the Father and the Son. This fellowship implies a personal interaction, where the Spirit comforts, guides, empowers, and assures believers of their identity as children of God. It underscores the relational aspect of our salvation and the ongoing intimate involvement of the Trinity in the lives of believers.