

Spirit of God

Video Transcript

The Invisible Energy of *Ruakh*

00:00—01:18

Jon: Let's say I want to learn about the Spirit of God. Where should I start?

Tim: Well, we should probably go to page one of the Bible.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: That's where the story begins with darkness, unordered potential, symbolized by the water. And there in the nothingness, notice God's Spirit is there hovering, ready to bring about order and life and beauty.

Jon: Yeah. Okay. But what am I supposed to be imagining? Like, what is God's Spirit?

Tim: Yeah. So "the Spirit" is a way the biblical authors talk about God's invisible but very real, personal presence. In Hebrew, the word is *ruakh*. You gotta kinda clear your throat at the end.

Jon: *Ruakh*.

Tim: That's it.

Jon: What is it?

Tim: Okay. So *ruakh* is a number of different things, but what they all have in common is what we might call "energy."

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So there's an invisible energy out there making clouds move and trees sway.

Jon: Yeah, the wind.

Tim: Exactly. And so in Hebrew, that is *ruakh*.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Now take a big breath.

[Jon inhales]

Tim: Okay. Feel that inside you?

Jon: Yeah, the air?

Tim: Well, more specifically, the energy, the vitality in your body that came when you took a deep breath. That also is *ruakh*.

Jon: *Ruakh*.

God's Life-Giving Presence

01:18—02:01

Tim: Mhm. Now, the same word also describes God in the Bible—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: —who is obviously way more than just energy. So *ruakh* is the life-giving presence of God's very person present within creation.

Jon: Okay. So *ruakh* is, like, a great metaphor then to try to understand that personal presence.

Tim: Yes. Just like wind and breath are invisible, so is God's Spirit.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Wind is full of power, and God's Spirit gives power to everything. And just like breath is keeping us alive, God's Spirit is sustaining everything that is alive.

Jon: Hmm. Yeah. We all exist because of God's *ruakh*.

Empowered for Good and Beautiful Things

02:01—04:31

Tim: Exactly. Now, as we continue on in the story of the Bible, what we see is that in addition to keeping us alive and breathing, which is great for us, God's *ruakh* also gives special energy to certain people for specific tasks. And the first person in the Bible this happens to is Joseph. So God's Spirit empowers him with wisdom to understand dreams.

Jon: Yeah. And then he comes up with the plan to save Egypt from a famine.

Tim: Mhm. It also happens to this guy named Bezalel, who is an artist. And God's Spirit energizes him with all this wisdom and skill to build the tabernacle.

Jon: Oh, it's like his creative genius gets supercharged by God so he can build this beautiful sacred space.

Tim: Yes. Now, Joseph and Bezalel, they're not perfect, but they wanted to do right by God. And so when God's Spirit empowered them and gave them this new energy—

Jon: It brings about good and beautiful things.

Tim: It did. But check this out. In the story of Samson, the Spirit of God empowers somebody, but their actions are not always aligned with God's wisdom.

Jon: Yeah. Samson does save Israel, but he leaves a brutal wake of destruction.

Tim: Hmm. So in the Bible, getting more of God's life-breath doesn't always mean that people do what God desires.

Jon: Yeah. That's a big problem.

Tim: It is a huge problem. And Israel's prophets saw this problem really clearly. So God gives us his Spirit—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —for life. But our desires are all disordered and misaligned, and so we're driven to use our gifts to end up hurting each other. And unleashing chaos in the world.

Jon: We're using the Spirit, but we're undoing the work that the Spirit wants to do, which is to create order in life.

Tim: That's right. So the prophets anticipated that God's Spirit would have to come in a new way, similar to Genesis 1, but now to recreate and bring order to the human heart and all of its desires.

Jon: So the Spirit can, like, get to the deepest parts of us and transform that and bring us back to God.

Tim: Yes. And the prophets actually hoped for even more.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: They announced that God's Spirit would one day permeate all of creation. Bring about a whole new kind of world, a "new creation" they called it, where disorder and death are replaced with the gift of God's life.

Jon: Okay that sounds good.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: How is this gonna happen?

A New Creation by God's Spirit

04:31—06:47

Tim: Okay. This is when we need to turn to the story of Jesus. So Jesus arrives on the scene, and there's this beautiful moment when he is being baptized in the water of the Jordan River.

Jon: Right. The sky opens up. God's Spirit comes and rests on Jesus, like a bird.

Tim: Yes, all an echo of Genesis chapter 1.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: But also more. Jesus is one with God, his Father. And so in him, we are seeing for the first time a human heart completely aligned with God and empowered by the Spirit to bring about a new creation. And it actually starts happening as Jesus restores people's bodies and their minds, forgiving their sins. He's bringing new life and undoing chaos and death.

Jon: Now many of Israel's religious leaders were actually threatened by this, and they arranged to have Jesus unfairly tried, and they killed him.

Tim: But even in the midst of that tragedy, God's Spirit was right there working. The earliest followers of Jesus, who actually met him alive from the dead, said that it was God's energizing Spirit that raised up Jesus.

Jon: Yeah, and this is an act of new creation.

Tim: Mhm. And it's just getting started. When Jesus appeared to his closest friends one time, he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Jon: Hmm. Yeah. And then in another story, the Spirit comes powerfully on all of Jesus' disciples with wind and fire.

Tim: Yes. The Spirit was breathing infinite love into their hearts, transforming their desires so that they could share the good news about God's new creation and learn to live by the wisdom and the guidance of the Spirit.

Jon: Hmm. Yeah, so the Spirit of God is hovering in the dark places around us, and it's hard to see where the Spirit is at work.

Tim: Yeah. It is really hard. But if we let the Spirit point us to Jesus and let it begin to transform those deep, dark places inside of us, we might just find that our efforts to love God and to love other people become energized by God's *ruakh*, and that can open the door to a whole new creation.