

We Believe in the Holy Spirit

Lesson 2

In the World

Lesson Guide



thirdmill

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HOW TO USE THIS LESSON GUIDE

This lesson guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video. If you do not have access to the video, the lesson guide will also work with the audio and/or manuscript versions of the lesson. Additionally, the video and lesson guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule viewing** — The Notes section of the lesson guide has been divided into segments that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the lesson guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each segment and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Notes

I. Introduction (0:20)

II. Creation (1:29)

“The work of creation is that wherein God did in the beginning, by the word of his power, make of nothing the world, and all things therein, for himself, within the space of six days, and all very good” (*Westminster Larger Catechism*, Question 15).

God’s creative work includes the initial creation of the universe and making new things on a continual basis.

The Father was the initiator of creation, but the Son and the Holy Spirit were involved in this work:

- Creation comes from the Father and through the Son (1 Corinthians 8:6).
- The Holy Spirit carried out the work, according to the plan of the Father and by means of the Son (Genesis 1).

Although the Old Testament doesn’t identify the Holy Spirit as a distinct person within the Godhead, it does indicate that God created the world by his Spirit.

The Holy Spirit was “hovering (*rachaph*) over the waters” (Genesis 1).

God’s Spirit “hovering” over the waters of creation implies that the Spirit was the parent that molded and nurtured the creation according to God’s word.

“Without him all was a dead sea, a confused deep, with darkness upon it, able to bring forth nothing ... but by the moving of the Spirit of God upon it, the principles of all those kinds, sorts, and forms of things, which ... make up its host and ornament, were communicated unto it” (John Owen, *A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit*, I. IV.).

Before the Holy Spirit’s work, creation was “formless and empty” (Genesis 1:2).

During days 1-3, the Spirit of God dealt with the formlessness of creation:

- Day 1: created light, day and night
- Day 2: created the atmosphere or sky
- Day 3: created dry land and the plants that grow on the land

During days 4-6, the Spirit of God addressed creation’s emptiness:

- Day 4: created sun, moon and stars
- Day 5: created sea creatures and birds
- Day 6: created land animals and human beings

Other Scripture texts that attribute God's creative work to his Spirit:

- Isaiah 40:12-13 (NASB) – “Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his Hand... Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord?”
- Psalm 104:24-30 – “In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures... When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.”

III. Providence (10:34)

Providence – God's work of governing and upholding all creation, including creatures, actions and things

A. Nature (11:41)

The most dramatic demonstration of God's providential power in nature was the flood in Noah's day (Genesis 6–9).

Demonstrations of the Spirit's providential power over nature:

- the flood (Genesis 6:3)
- the plagues on Egypt (Exodus 7–12)
- the parting of the Red Sea (Exodus 14)
- the Israelites' battle with the Amorites when the sun stood still in the sky (Joshua 10:13)

The book of Job points to God's Spirit as the one that carries out his divine will in the world (Job 34:14, 15).

The Holy Spirit governs the world in such a way that he regularly renews its features and governs the populations of its creatures:

- Psalm 135 – He makes rain, clouds, wind and other elements.
- Psalm 65 – He changes the earth's geography by creating rivers, valleys, mountains, and deserts.
- Psalm 104 – He makes springs pour water, provides food for animals, gives life to plants and trees, provides homes for birds and animals, controls the sun and moon, night and day, and yearly seasons.

Though nature appears to be self-regulating, God governs these behaviors (Psalm 104:24-30; Isaiah 34:15, 16).

God's Spirit manages creation in a way that both perpetuates and limits life:

- He sustains their breath, or spirit, to keep them alive.
- He removes that breath when it's time for them to die.

Jesus taught that if people pursue God's kingdom and righteousness, God in his providence will meet their daily needs (Matthew 6:26-33).

While the Father decrees providential work, it's the Holy Spirit who carries out these decrees (Matthew 10:20; Luke 11:13; John 15:26; Acts 2:33; 1 Peter 1:2).

B. Humanity (18:45)

God works in humanity as he does in the natural world:

- manages and governs our environment (Psalm 135:6, 7)
- controls our food sources and our reproduction (Deuteronomy 7:13)
- is the source of life (Job 33:4)
- directly influences our circumstances, our bodies, and even our minds

The Spirit's providential work includes giving us everything we have, and governing the times and exact places that we live (Acts 17:24-26).

We embrace the Spirit's providence in our own lives when we pray believing that God is able and willing to change our circumstances, our health, our lifespans, and even our minds and spirits.

Examples of the Holy Spirit governing the lives of human beings:

- Deuteronomy 2:30, 31 – God made Sihon king of Heshbon stubborn in spirit and obstinate in heart.
- Exodus 10:20, 27; 11:10 – God hardened Pharaoh’s heart.
- Psalm 135:6-12 – The Spirit providentially controlled Sihon, Pharaoh and other kings.
- Daniel 4 – God punished Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, by taking away his royal authority and his sanity.
- Daniel 4:35; Psalm 33:10, 11 – God governs human decisions and actions to accomplish his purposes.

God’s providential governance extends to every human being and every aspect of our lives, even our hearts and minds (Psalm 33:13-15).

The Holy Spirit’s providential work is sometimes the terrifying implementation of divine judgment (Romans 1:24-28).

Divine providence means that God doesn’t always wait until the Day of Judgment to punish wickedness or to bless his people.

Theological traditions differ in their understanding of the Holy Spirit's providential work in bringing people to faith in Christ:

- View 1:
 - Human beings have the natural ability to choose either the path to salvation or the path to destruction.
 - The Spirit's providential work focuses on bringing us into an encounter with the gospel.

- View 2:
 - Human beings lack the natural ability to respond positively to the gospel and, in our fallen state, we will always choose the path of destruction.
 - The Holy Spirit provides prevenient grace (grace that comes before saving faith and enables us to choose the path of salvation).
 - When both paths are open to us, we can choose either to receive or to reject Christ.

- View 3:
 - Human beings lack the natural ability to choose life.
 - The Holy Spirit provides irresistible grace (grace that *ensures* that those he chooses to save will choose the path of salvation).

All three views affirm the Holy Spirit's influence and governance over the lives of human beings and even over the choices we make.

IV. Revelation (33:32)

Revelation – God’s work of making himself known to human beings

A. Models (34:38)

1. Natural and Supernatural Revelation (35:12)

- natural revelation – knowledge of God that comes through the ordinary workings of the natural world and providence

- supernatural revelation – knowledge of God that comes directly from God or from his messengers

- The distinction between natural and supernatural revelation recognizes that –
 - God uses many different means of revelation (e.g., nature, preternatural realm, direct communication with humans).

 - God created all that exists, so everything and everyone reveal something about him.

- Weakness – This model fails to recognize that all revelation is ultimately supernatural.

2. Redemptive and Non-redemptive Revelation (37:11)

- redemptive revelation – knowledge of God with the intent to accomplish salvation through Christ

- non-redemptive revelation – knowledge of God that doesn't take sinfulness or redemption into account

- Weakness – Many types of knowledge are non-redemptive from one perspective but redemptive from another.

3. General and Special Revelation (38:39)

- Approach 1 (focuses on the means by which revelation is given):
 - *general revelation* comes through natural means
 - *special revelation* comes through supernatural or preternatural means

- Approach 2 (focuses on the audience that receives the revelation):
 - *general revelation* is potentially accessible to everyone
 - *special revelation* is available only to a select few
 - This approach recognizes that not all people receive the same revelation from God.

- Approach 3 (distinguishes between the content of general and special revelation):
 - *general revelation* doesn't take into account issues like sin and salvation
 - *special revelation* is intended for salvation
 - This approach acknowledges God's choice of certain people for salvation and his determination to bring them to faith in Christ.
 - Weakness – Some revelation in this view may not fall into either category.

4. Act and Word Revelation (40:52)

- act revelation – God's self-revelation by means of his works and actions
- word revelation – God's self-disclosure by means of inspired words, whether spoken or written
- This model emphasizes –
 - the different methods God uses to communicate
 - the clarity of God's words over his works
 - the interconnections between God's words and actions
- Weakness – This model focuses primarily on God's dramatic acts and downplays less noteworthy revelation.

5. Mediate and Immediate Revelation (42:32)

- mediate revelation – comes through some form of medium or means, e.g.,
 - creation
 - prophetic messenger
 - Scripture

- immediate revelation – comes directly from God, e.g.,
 - innate knowledge of God
 - illumination
 - inward leading

- This model reminds us to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's movements in our lives.

- Weakness – This model can be abused because many people can't distinguish between the Spirit's inward leading and illumination and their own natural thoughts and feelings.

We should test every revelation and claim to see if they accord with God and Scripture (Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1).

B. Source (44:23)

God is the ultimate source of revelation, and Scripture identifies the Spirit as the one who reveals God to us (John 14:26; 1 Corinthians 2:4; Ephesians 1:17, 3:5; 1 Corinthians 2:10; 1 John 5:6).

The Bible *explicitly* attributes some types of revelation to the Holy Spirit:

1. Inspiration of prophecy and Scripture (47:30)

The Spirit's inspiration of prophecy and Scripture is mentioned in places like:

- Acts 1:16, 4:25, 28:25
- Ephesians 3:4, 5
- Hebrews 9:8
- 1 Corinthians 14:1
- John 14:26
- 2 Peter 1:20-21

2. Illumination and inward leading (49:49)

The Holy Spirit is directly associated with illumination and inward leading.

- illumination – a divine gift of knowledge or understanding that's primarily cognitive
- inward leading – a divine gift of knowledge or understanding that's primarily emotive or intuitive

The Spirit's illumination and inward leading are a revelation of God's mind and thoughts to his people (1 Corinthians 2:9-16).

The Holy Spirit directly grants wisdom and insight to believers, enabling us to interpret the Spirit's other revelation accurately (1 Corinthians 2).

The Holy Spirit grants illumination to help us know God better, and inward leading to enlighten our hearts (Ephesians 1:17-18; Colossians 1:9; 1 John 2:27).

3. Miracles, signs and wonders (52:09)

In Scripture, miracles, signs and wonders were extraordinary works of providence performed by the Holy Spirit.

The purpose of miracles, signs and wonders was to confirm God's word to humanity (Hebrews 2:4).

Both the Old and New Testaments confirm the revelatory function of miracles, signs and wonders:

- Exodus 4; 7:3; 10:1, 2 – The Spirit performed signs through Moses to convince Israel that Moses was to lead them and to prove to Pharaoh that God was the true God.
- Numbers 14:22 – The Spirit's miracles during Israel's wilderness wanderings proved that Israel should follow Moses to the Promised Land.
- Deuteronomy 4:34 – Signs and wonders from Israel's exodus were proof of God's covenant benevolence and faithfulness.

- 2 Samuel 7:23 – Israel’s conquest of the Promised Land included signs and wonders proving that God favored his people and had power over the false Canaanite gods.
- Daniel 4:2, 3 – King Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams, insanity and subsequent restoration were signs and wonders proving that God was the source of Nebuchadnezzar’s success.
- Daniel 6:27 – Daniel’s rescue from the lions was called a sign and wonder because it validated his prophetic ministry.
- Matthew 12:39; Luke 11:29; John 2:11, 23; 3:2; 4:54 – Jesus’ miracles are called “signs” because they verified his message.
- Matthew 12:18, 28; Luke 4:14, 18; Acts 2:22 – Jesus relied on the Holy Spirit for his miracles so that his gospel would be confirmed by the Holy Spirit’s testimony.
- Acts 2:43, 5:12 – The apostles performed many wonders and miraculous signs to testify to the gospel.
- Acts 4:30 – The church prayed that God would perform signs and wonders through them as a testimony to Jesus.

Ultimately, all revelation proclaims the glory of God and obligates us to repent and be saved by grace through faith in Christ.

V. Common Grace (1:00:15)

Unredeemed human beings are slaves to sin, but still exhibit truthfulness, goodness and beauty because of common grace.

Primary elements of common grace:

- blessings that restrict evil and increase goodness
- blessings that meet humanity's daily needs

A. Promoting Goodness (1:03:32)

God's primary purpose for humanity is for us to turn the world into his earthly kingdom.

“Cultural mandate” – the task God assigned humanity of ruling over creation on his behalf by filling and subduing the earth (Genesis 1:26-28).

The Holy Spirit providentially governs humanity in a way that makes possible the expansion and stability of human culture:

- provides civil governments to restrain and punish human evil (Romans 13:1-7)
- provides humanity at large with a common sense of justice and conscience (John 16:8-11; Romans 1:32; 2 Corinthians 4:2)
- provides human beings with sufficient wisdom and intelligence to discern at least some measure of true wisdom (1 Kings 10; 2 Chronicles 9; James 1:17; Job 32:8)

The Holy Spirit providentially governs the world so that good behavior tends to produce good results:

- Disciplining and educating children tends to make them more civil and responsible adults.
- Treating others with kindness and fairness tends to make them treat you the same way.
- Gentle answers turn away anger, but harsh words stir up anger.

The Holy Spirit sometimes promotes goodness by punishing and killing evildoers (Psalm 75:5-8, 76:10-12; Isaiah 59:15-21).

B. Promoting Life (1:10:22)

The Holy Spirit promotes life when he:

- maintains the world's natural order so that people can obtain daily necessities like food and water (Acts 14:15-17)
- allows humans to bear and raise children (Genesis 20:18, 29:31, 33:5; Deuteronomy 28:11, 30:9; Joshua 24:3, 4; Psalm 113:9, 127:3)
- is patient and compassionate toward all human beings, including those who never come to faith (Psalm 145:8, 9; Isaiah 26:10; Romans 2:4, 5; Luke 6:35).

- builds the kingdom of God throughout the world enabling humans to subdue the earth, to rule over its creatures, and fill the world with images of God
- allows all human beings — including those that hate him — to experience heartfelt joy (Acts 14:17)

The Holy Spirit's ministry of common grace is:

- an expression of kindness, mercy and patience toward those who don't deserve it
- the ground of all goodness and order in human culture
- a compelling reason for unbelievers to stop opposing God, to repent of their sins, and to receive forgiveness in Christ

VI. Conclusion (1:15:40)

Review Questions

1. List the 6 days of creation and describe the work the Spirit accomplished each day.
2. What is "providence"? Give some biblical examples of the Spirit's providential work in nature.

3. How does the Holy Spirit providentially work in humanity? Include references from Scripture to support your answer.

4. The lesson discusses five common models that theologians have used to categorize the Holy Spirit’s work of revelation. Identify and summarize each model, including the strengths and weaknesses (if any) of each.

7. What are some ways that unbelievers benefit from the Holy Spirit's work of promoting life?

Application Questions

1. Genesis 1:2 uses the metaphor of a powerful bird caring for its young to describe the Spirit's work in creation. How does this powerful metaphor affect your view of God's love for you and the rest of his creation?
2. How would you respond to someone who believes that God created the world and then left it alone to function on its own?
3. Read Psalm 104. Write your own poem or song praising the Holy Spirit for his works of creation and providence.
4. What counsel would you give to someone who believes that the Holy Spirit sometimes violates people's wills or pushes them to do sinful things?
5. Several passages in Scripture describe God as a potter and human beings as clay, and these all conclude that the potter has the right to make whatever he wants with his clay. Does this mean that we aren't responsible for our actions? Explain your answer.
6. The lesson discusses three traditional understandings of the Holy Spirit's providential work in bringing people to faith in Christ. Which view do you think best represents the teachings of Scripture? Why?
7. Give some examples from your own life of times when the Holy Spirit revealed God to you through: 1) the natural world, 2) illumination and inward leading, 3) Scripture, or 4) some other means. How might you use these examples as you teach or disciple others?
8. How can we determine if our thoughts, emotions, visions, and interpretations of Scripture come from the Holy Spirit? Why is it important for us to distinguish between the inward leading and illumination that come from the Holy Spirit and the thoughts and feelings that just naturally come to us?
9. Do you believe that the Holy Spirit still performs miracles in the world today? Why or why not?
10. What evidence of the Holy Spirit's common grace do you see in the world today? What do you think the world would be like without the Spirit's work of promoting goodness and restraining evil?
11. How does the Spirit's ministry of common grace promote life? How might you use this understanding of the Spirit's ministry to share the gospel with an unbeliever?
12. What is the most significant thing you learned in this lesson?

Glossary

act revelation – God’s self-revelation by means of his works and actions

Berkhof, Louis – (1873-1957) Influential Reformed theologian who wrote *Systematic Theology* in 1932

common grace – God's benevolence shown to all people

cultural mandate – The command in Genesis 1:28 instructing humanity to develop and rule the creation to display God's glory

Deism – Philosophy popular in the 17th and 18th centuries that teaches that after God created the universe, he left it to function on its own

general revelation – God’s use of the natural world and its workings to make his existence, nature, presence, actions and will known to all humanity

illumination – Divine gift of knowledge or understanding, primarily cognitive, attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit

immediate revelation – Revelation that comes directly from God

inward leading – Divine gift of knowledge or understanding, primarily emotive or intuitive, attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit

irresistible grace – Grace from the Holy Spirit that ensures that we will choose the path of salvation

mediate revelation – Revelation that comes through some form of medium or means other than directly from God himself

natural revelation – Knowledge of God that comes through the ordinary workings of the natural world and providence

New Jerusalem – The capital city and centerpiece of the new creation where God will establish his heavenly throne and manifest his glory to his people

non-redemptive revelation – Knowledge of God that is not specifically intended to accomplish salvation

Owen, John – (1616-1683) English theologian, pastor and author of numerous important theological works

prevenient grace – Grace from the Holy Spirit that comes before saving faith and enables us to choose the path of salvation

providence – God's active involvement in history as he works out his eternal plan for his creation and the welfare of his people

rachaph – Hebrew word (transliteration) meaning “hovering” (as in a bird caring for its offspring)

redemptive revelation – Knowledge of God that is intended to accomplish salvation

revelation – God's communication of truth to man

special revelation – God’s disclosures of himself and his will to a select number of people through dreams, visions, prophets, the Scriptures, and other similar means

supernatural revelation – Knowledge of God that comes directly from God or from his messengers

Westminster Larger Catechism – A traditional Protestant summary of Christian teaching, originally published in 1647, more comprehensive than the Shorter Catechism

word revelation – God’s self-disclosure by means of inspired words, whether spoken or written