

How Do You Know When The Holy Spirit is at Work?

The Holy Spirit is not a feeling. Nor is the Holy Spirit an “it.”

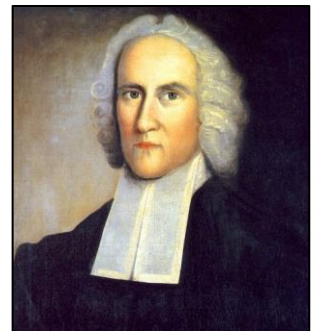
The Holy Spirit is a person in the Trinity, God. We might also think of the Holy Spirit as God’s awakening power, active and alive today in the world and through those who are “in Christ.”

But how do you know when the Holy Spirit is at work?

A famous theologian named Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) wrestled with the same thing. In 1741 he wrote *The*

Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God, to help us. He makes five points (that I re-frame as questions below):

1. “When the operation is such as to raise their esteem of that Jesus who was born of the Virgin, and was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem; and seems more to confirm and establish their minds in the truth of what the gospel declares to us of his being the Son of God, and the Saviour of men; it is a sure sign that it is from the Spirit of God.”
2. “When the spirit that is at work operates against the interests of Satan’s kingdom, which lies in encouraging and establishing sin, and cherishing men’s worldly lusts; this is a sure sign that it is a true, and not a false spirit.”
3. “The spirit that operates in such a manner as to cause in men a greater regard to the Holy Scriptures, and establishes them more in their truth and divinity is certainly the Spirit of God.”
4. “...if by observing the manner of the operation of a spirit that is at work among a people, we see that it operates as a spirit of truth, leading persons to truth, convincing them of those things that are true, we may safely determine that it is a right and true spirit.”
5. “If the spirit that is at work among a people operates as a spirit of love to God and man, it is a sure sign that it is the Spirit of God.”



That language might seem a bit archaic to you. So think of it like this:

Maybe something is happening in your life and you’re wondering if the Holy Spirit is at work and is prompting you to consider path/action A, B, or C. Why not ask yourself the following questions (which I have based on Edwards’ statements listed above):

1. Does it raise your admiration of Jesus?
2. Does it discourage sin?
3. Does it confirm the truths and divinity of the Bible?
4. Can it lead others to God’s truth/path?
5. Does it result in love toward God & people?

If the answers are yes, then the certainty rises that the Holy Spirit is at work.