



EMPOWERED

A GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING THE HOLY SPIRIT



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A] The Nature of the Holy Spirit

We are to start this course by asking the question, “Who or what is the Holy Spirit?” Does it make sense to you that we can’t relate to God, the Holy Spirit in a meaningful way unless we know what or who we are referring to?

The Holy Spirit is not an optional extra in the lives of Christians. In fact, in Romans 8:14 Paul stated that all children of God are led by the Holy Spirit. Most people find it easier to relate to Jesus because he was a flesh and blood person who lived on earth and the gospels give a detailed account of his life and ministry. On the other hand, they know very little about the Holy Spirit and shy away from him because sensation-seeking movies and television series make the spiritual world out to be crazy and scary!

Nevertheless, scripture gives us sufficient information and insight to enable us to trust and relate to the Holy Spirit.

1] The Holy Spirit is a person

1. **Read John 14:15-17.** When Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit does he use the term, “it” or “he/him” and what does your answer tell you about the **nature** of the Holy Spirit?

2. The Holy Spirit is a person:

The Spirit must never be referred to as, “it” because he is **not a power or influence** that operates in the world as a radiation from God. Many believe that he is some sort of life force or energy. This is contrary to what scripture teaches, as a force or energy is impersonal and amoral. He is a specific, unique **personality** with all the characteristics of a person.

N.B. There is such a thing as spiritual power and energy, which is released by the person called the Holy Spirit.

Read the following Scriptures and write down the action, response or characteristic of the Holy Spirit which tells us that he is a person and not an influence or power.

a. **Acts 8:29**

b. **Romans 15:30**

c. **Acts 15:28**

d. **In Ephesians 4:30** Paul instructed the church not to “grieve” or “bring sorrow to” the Holy Spirit. What do we do or fail to do that causes the Spirit to be upset with us and why do you think that the Spirit is so sensitive?

e. When I grieve the Holy Spirit, how does this effect my spiritual life and my relationship with God?



Personal Application ▪

1. Do you make the mistake of sometimes treating the Spirit as a force or power rather than a person? If so, how has this effected your spiritual life?

2. Look back on this season of your life that you are in and determine whether you have grieved the Spirit or obeyed his leadership. If you have caused him sorrow, repent and draw close to him again.

2] The Holy Spirit is a distinct 'spirit' being

1. The Holy Spirit does not have a physical body. In the New Testament, the word "spirit" is a translation of the Greek word "*pneuma*", which is also translated "wind" or "breath". Both these words help us understand the nature of the Holy Spirit – we cannot actually see him but we can hear him, feel him and see the results of his work. (Acts 2:2-4)

2. The Holy Spirit is not just any spirit i.e. he is not a human spirit, an evil spirit or a so-called 'ghost' or apparition. 1 Corinthians 2:10-13 is very clear about the identity of the Spirit. Read the passage: Whose spirit is he?

3. The Spirit is also distinct from the Father and the son. He is not just another name for the Father or Jesus. Luke 1:35 tells us that the Holy Spirit came upon Mary and "overshadowed" her in such a way that she conceived Jesus in her womb. In truth, Jesus could not have conceived himself! Read Luke 3:21-22, which highlights the separateness or distinction of the three persons in the Trinity. The Spirit arrived just as Jesus emerged from the water. Where did he come from and in what form? From where did the Father speak when he declared his love for Jesus? (After the Spirit had descended on Jesus)

4. In Matthew 12:31-2 we note that the actual personality of Jesus is different to the personality of the Holy Spirit. If someone blasphemes or speaks against Jesus that sin can be forgiven but the sin of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit can never be forgiven.

- i. Why do you think this sin can never be forgiven?

- ii. If this sin can never be forgiven in this age or the next, it means that the person who commits this sin will experience eternal damnation. This sin can therefore never be committed by accident or a moment of failure. It is the end result of a lengthy process of proud disobedience and rejection. Let us examine the process as presented in scripture:

1. The Spirit is saddened/grieved by the person's heart attitude of unrepentance towards his/her sin. (Ephesians 4:30)
2. If this sin continues it leads the person to _____ resist the Holy Spirit. (Acts 7:51)
3. 1 Thessalonians 5:19 gives us the next result of ongoing sin:

4. Hebrews 3:7-13 tells us what happens when we stifle the voice and activity of the Spirit. What do we do to our hearts? (N.B. the human heart is easily deceived and we usually don't even realize that our hearts have turned against God – b Jeremiah 17:9)

5. A hardened heart leads to a depraved mind that calls good _____ and _____ good and ends up deciding to do things that should never be done. (Isaiah 5:20; Romans 1:28)

6. The hardening of a heart reaches a point, determined by God alone, after which the Holy Spirit will no longer strive to lead a person to repentance. Such a decision lasts for eternity! (Genesis 6:3; Proverbs 29:1)



Personal Application ▪

1. What are some of the signs that our hearts are hardening against the voice of the Spirit? Do you see any of these signs in your life?

2. If a person is worried that he or she may have committed the unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit, but wishes to confess the sin and repent, what response would you give?

3] The Holy Spirit is God (Deity)

1. The Holy Spirit is fully divine. This means that he is not just 'godlike' but he is as divine as the Father and the Son. N.B. at the very foundation of our Christian doctrine is the belief that God is a divine trinity i.e. there is only one God but three distinct personalities with their own separate work, all operating in perfect unity. Acts 5:3-5 confirms that the Holy Spirit is actually God:

a. In verse 3, who does Peter accuse Ananias of lying to? _____

b. In verse 4, Peter clarifies that he didn't just lie to the apostles but to _____

2. The Holy Spirit has all the characteristics of God. Read the scriptures and write down the meaning of these four characteristics of God, which are evident in the Holy Spirit:

a. Omniscient (1 Corinthians 2:10)

b. Omnipresent (John 14:17)

c. Omnipotent (Zechariah 4:6)

d. Eternal (Hebrews 9:14)

4] The Holy Spirit is loving and caring

1. All the amazing attributes of the Holy Spirit would not really encourage or excite us if it wasn't for the attribute mentioned in Psalm 143:10. How is the Spirit described in this scripture?

2. Read Romans 5:5 and explain what the Spirit does with the love that is within him by virtue the fact that he is fully God:

4. Mention some of the things that the Holy Spirit does for us on a daily basis because of the great love he has for us.

5] The Holy Spirit is a creator

It is important to know that the nature of the God we serve is to be constantly creative. (This includes Father, Son and Spirit.) Scientists tell us that new stars, galaxies and planets are being created all the time. Amazing! Of course, on our own planet earth, we marvel at the constant birth of human and animal babies and the sight of new plants and trees springing up out of the ground! God deliberately created plants and trees with seeds that would produce plants and seeds of the same kind. (Genesis 1:11-12) In Numbers 27:15-16 we read of Moses prayer to God: *"O Lord, you are the God who gives breath to all creatures."*

1. Read Psalm 104:30. Depending on the version you read, it will either say, *"When you send your Spirit"* (NIV) or *"When you give them your breath"* (NL). Scripture often uses the term, *"God's breath"* to describe the work of the Holy Spirit under the leadership and direction of the Father. What does the psalmist say happens when the Spirit is sent?

2. The Holy Spirit's involvement in creation is mentioned in the second verse of the bible, Genesis 1:2. How does this verse describe the actions of the Spirit at the time of creation? (It creates an image similar to one that describes a mother bird caring for and protecting its young)

3. Jesus began his ministry only after he was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. (Luke 4:1; 4: 14-15) Not only did the Spirit create new things, but he also recreated that which has been broken, diseased or destroyed by sin. A good example of the Spirit's creative ministry is the time that Jesus and his disciples fed a huge multitude of people from five rolls of bread and two fish. He expanded that small meal to feed the crowd and twelve baskets of food were left over for the disciples! (Matthew 14: 13-21) Read Matthew 17: 24-27 and describe the creative miracle performed by the Spirit's power

4. Today, the Holy Spirit is the same gracious, caring Spirit who 'hovers' over the lives of lost, damaged people, waiting for the opportunity to create something new and beautiful in the lives and circumstances of those people. A good example of this is the role played by the Spirit in our salvation, explained by Jesus in John 3: 1-8. Jesus said that no one can enter God's kingdom unless they are, **"born again."** Explain what this means:



Personal Application ▪

1. Write a testimony of the Spirit's creative work in your life or circumstances
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B] The Holy Spirit's Purpose on Earth

1] Why is it important for us to understand the Holy Spirit's purpose?

1. If we want to grow in our relationship with the Spirit and learn how to work together with him, then it makes sense that we should understand the purpose for which God has sent him to planet earth. He only works within the parameters given to him by the Father and the Son and will never do anything that goes against what He has come here to do. Read John 16:12-15:

- a. What important role has the Spirit been sent to play in our lives? Explain:
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- b. Does he act independently? If not, from where does the Spirit receive his truth?
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2. The Holy Spirit knows the thoughts and plans of God like no one else. (1 Corinthians 2:11) This should prove to be a great blessing for all Christians! He lives within us so he knows our thoughts and intentions just as he knows the thoughts and intentions of God, the Father! So, when our intentions and actions differ from those that God has chosen or intended for us, the Holy Spirit warns us not to continue on that path and guides or shepherds us in the right direction. Read the story of how the Spirit 'prevented' Paul from preaching in certain areas in Acts 16:6-10.

- a. How do you think the Spirit prevented him from entering Asia and Bithynia?
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- b. Why do you think that God stopped Paul from preaching the gospel in the areas chosen by Paul at that time?
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- c. What do you think the result would have been if Paul ignored the Spirit?
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- d. Paul was clear-minded about his missionary agenda and objectives and but he was always flexible to allow the Holy Spirit to change his plans. He knew that God had called him to preach the gospel to the gentiles so he, prayerfully, made arrangements to preach in previously unreached communities and begun to travel towards these areas. When the Spirit blocked him, he waited for further instructions. How did the Holy Spirit then lead him to Macedonia? (V. 9-10)
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3. The importance of understanding the purpose of the Holy Spirit is emphasised in Galatians 5:16-25. Read this passage carefully and answer the following questions:

- a. Verse 25 is very important because it describes the extent of the relationship we should have with the Spirit. What is it that God expects us to do?
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- b. What is the end result when someone chooses not to walk in step with the Spirit in all aspects of life? (verse 17, 19-21)
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- c. What is the result when we follow the guidance of the Spirit? (V. 16-18)
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- d. What fruit does the Spirit produce in us when we allow him to lead us? (N.B. It is not possible for us to consistently display these amazing qualities from out of our human natures. We can't do it without the Holy Spirit)
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The more we walk in accordance with the God's purposes for our lives, as shared by the Spirit, the more we will grow in our relationship with the Spirit.

4. In this next point we are going to look at two people who did not walk in step with the Spirit and so became self-deceived and made a fatal decision. I refer to a husband and wife named Ananias and Sapphira, who served in the early church in Jerusalem. (Acts 5:1-10) This is an interesting story about two people who completely missed the boat when it came to walking in step with the Spirit.

- a. What did they do wrong?
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- b. When their deception was exposed, what consequences did they endure?
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All that was needed in Ananias and Sapphira's life was truthfulness: they should have allowed the Spirit to lead them into the truth about their own hearts and motives. The apostle's would not have held it against them if they had told them that they wanted to keep some of the money and nor would God have. The problem was that they lied in order to deceive people about their generosity. This offended the Holy Spirit and destroyed the righteous unity in the new church.



Personal Application ▪

1. It is so easy to judge Ananias and Sapphira for their mistake, but take a moment to look into your own life and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you where you have perhaps walked out of step with him. Write some of them down. Then ask God for forgiveness and determine in your heart to follow his leading in every area of your life.

2] Incorrect understandings of the purpose of the Holy Spirit

It is a fact that today many people have wrong ideas about the purpose of the Holy Spirit on earth, so we are going to look at some of these misunderstandings and explain why they are incorrect.

1. **The first misunderstanding** is the belief that the Holy Spirit has come so that we might experience a "spiritual vibe" or a stirring, ecstatic experience. People who believe this tend to run from one spiritual renewal meeting to another seeking the next great 'Holy Spirit outpouring'. Often they feel empty a few days later as the harsh reality of life, with its many disappointment, sets in. They feel cheated if the church fails to provide them with an acceptable experience during church meetings.

- a. Why is it dangerous for Christians to seek regular ecstatic, spiritual experiences?

- b. In Acts 1: 8 Jesus advised his disciples that the Holy Spirit would give them power to be his witnesses. The Greek word for 'witness' is *martus*, which also means "martyr". (All the apostles, except John, died a martyr's death.) I.e. The Spirit empowers us to represent Jesus in very practical and difficult situations. History tells us that the church grew rapidly in times of war, persecution and plagues, as Christians persistently ministered in the power of the Spirit. The Spirit definitely did not function to provide the disciples with an emotional escape from the challenging circumstances of their lives. In acts chapter 4 we read that Peter and John were threatened by the religious leaders, but after their release they had a prayer meeting, where they were all filled with the Spirit. Read Acts 4:31: what did they then do?

- c. This does not mean that a Christian should never experience emotional joy when being filled with the Holy Spirit. We are, by nature, holistic creatures and when we have a significant spiritual experience with God, we often also have a physical and emotional response to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit i.e. our whole body, soul and spirit is involved in the experience. Where we make a mistake, is to think that God is not moving or speaking unless we experience an emotional feeling. There are definitely times when God moves powerfully in and through us and we have no physical or emotional sense of his

operation. People make the error of running after the residual side effects of the presence and the work of the Holy Spirit, instead of focusing on the Person of the Holy Spirit and what He is saying to us.

2. **The second misunderstanding** is the mistaken belief that the Holy Spirit gives us gifts and power for our own personal benefit i.e. the gifts shape our personal identity and significance in life. People who hold this view tend to see gifts as “spiritual medals” that they have earned and then provide much-needed status and status in the church. They generally only remain in a local church that recognizes their ‘spiritual gifts’ and provides a platform for ministry.

- a. Read 1 Corinthians 12: 7-11 concerning the gifts of the Spirit? What is the clear purpose for giving a gift to a Christian?

- b. In verse 11, Paul made the point that that the Spirit is the one who distributes spiritual gift, and he alone decides what gifts each person will receive. In effect, who then is the true owner of all spiritual gifts?

3. **The third misunderstanding** is that people assume that the Holy Spirit should provide an answer to every single question they have and should help them to make every decision in daily life e.g. what clothing to wear or which route to take home from work. The problem with this viewpoint is that it has some basis in truth but has been warped by a lack of balance. The Holy Spirit is our counselor and guide and does help us through our day, but we **also** have been gifted with a **mind** capable of practical decision-making. N.B. Paul made a number of good leadership decisions and only failed to follow through with them **if** the Holy Spirit stopped him! (**Acts 16:6-10**). How should we distinguish between decisions that require the leading of the Holy Spirit from those we should make ourselves?

3] The Primary Purpose of the Holy Spirit: To Point People to Jesus

1. Often people look at the gifts or manifestations of the Spirit as the focal point of the Holy Spirit’s ministry. What they fail to realize, is that every miracle, every word, every prophesy has one aim; to direct people towards Jesus Christ.

- a. As we have already read in Acts 1: 8, the Holy Spirit enabled Jesus’ disciples to be **his witnesses** in the rest of the world, as well as in Jerusalem. This would happen through a spiritual boldness, anointed preaching, fearless faith, successful use of spiritual gifts such as healing, and displaying the character and nature of Jesus. To what extent do we see these qualities in the modern church?

- b. In Acts 2:14-47, we read about Peter's first, anointed gospel sermon (witness) on the Day of Pentecost. What were the results?

- c. Read **Acts 4:31 and 33**. What did the disciples do after an amazing experience with the Holy Spirit during a prayer meeting?

2. So often we think it is our job to **convict people** of their sin and convince them that Jesus is their Saviour, but that is not our job at all. Our job is to share about Jesus and testify about what He has done in our lives and the rest is up to the Holy Spirit. Read **John 16: 8-11**. Describe the conviction the Holy Spirit brings to the unbeliever?

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

N.B. We read in Jeremiah 17:9 that the natural state of man's heart is deceitful and wicked, so it can never really recognize and accept its need of salvation. No heart can truly be won for Christ without the supernatural conviction that comes from the ministry of the Holy Spirit.



Personal Application ▪

1. If the Holy Spirit needs to convict in all three areas, how should it change the way you share the gospel?

3. Read **John 14:26** and note that Jesus promised that the Father would send the Holy Spirit as His representative (NL) – not our representative! ["In my name" – NIV] The Spirit will teach us everything that we need to know for life and ministry and will remind us of everything he has already told us – through the written word. We position ourselves to be taught by the Holy Spirit when we study and meditate on God's word.



Personal Application ▪

1. What are you doing to position yourself to be taught by the Holy Spirit?

2. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you an opportunity this week to minister with him to somebody about Jesus. While doing so, ask the Spirit to open that person's heart and convict him or her of the need for Jesus. Write down how the Spirit used you.

C] The Baptism in the Holy Spirit

1. It is the Fulfilment of a Promise from God

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is an experience that was promised or prophesied by the prophet Joel approximately 800 hundred years before the birth of Christ. It was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost.

N.B. The baptism in the Spirit is not the same as baptism in water.

Read **Joel 2:28-29** and answer:

- a. What did God promise to do with His Spirit?

- b. What is so significant and original about the promise to include the categories of sons and daughters, old men, and women?

N.B. God offers His precious Holy Spirit to everyone, regardless of culture!

2. The baptism in the Spirit

For some reason many Christians, worldwide, are sceptical and confused about the existence of a second experience with the Holy Spirit, the so-called, “*baptism in the Spirit*”. As far as they are concerned, we have a full experience with the Spirit at the time of our salvation and the phenomenon of, “speaking in tongues” was unique to the Day of Pentecost and the early church. However, we believe that when a person becomes a believer, the Holy Spirit comes to live within, as promised by Jesus. After that, a baptism in the Spirit takes place that gives us power to serve Jesus and be his witness in the world. This baptism occurs whenever a believer opens his or her heart to receive the baptism.

N.B. A person can possibly be baptised in the Spirit immediately after becoming born again.

1. Read **Mark 1:8** and **Matthew 3:11-12**: Who baptises us in the Holy Spirit?

2. **Acts 8:14-17** contains the story of the baptism in the Spirit of believers in Samaria. What happened before Peter and John were sent to Samaria and what occurred when they laid their hands on the believers?

3. In Acts 19:1-6 we note that Paul was addressing folk who had already given their lives to Christ. He asked them, “*Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?*” The answer was, “**No**”, making it very obvious that this spiritual connection with the Holy Spirit was a second experience. What happened to the people as soon as the Spirit came on them?

4. **Speaking in tongues as evidence:** The Bible does not state categorically that speaking in tongues is the initial evidence of the baptism in the Spirit, but in the book of Acts, we see that people spoke in tongues whenever they received the baptism e.g. in the city of Ephesus (**Acts 19:6**). We therefore deduce that 'speaking in new tongues/languages is the accepted evidence that someone has been baptised in the Spirit. Read **Acts 10:44-46**. Whilst Peter was preaching the Gospel to the gentiles at Cornelius' house, the Holy Spirit came on them. How did the Jewish Christians who had accompanied Peter know that these gentiles had received the Holy Spirit?
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This immediate connection between the baptism in the Spirit and tongues strongly suggests that tongues were accepted as the initial evidence of the baptism. However, we cannot be dogmatic about this.

3. The baptism in the Spirit is a free gift available to all believers

1. The baptism in the Spirit is a free gift and is not connected to how long you have been a Christian or how mature you are as in the faith. E.g. in the previous passage we read, the gentiles in Cornelius' house had just given their hearts to Jesus when they spoke in tongues – it was almost simultaneous! The baptism is a gift of grace from God and cannot be earned; it is not a prize for good behaviour.
 2. Read **John 7:37-39**. On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles Jesus stood up and announced to all a new dispensation of the Holy Spirit that was about to commence. He was referring to the baptism in the Spirit and addressed "*anyone*" and "*whoever*", indicating that the baptism was not a privilege offered to just a few Christians but was open to everyone. In verse 38, Jesus explained what would happen in the heart of a person who receives the Holy Spirit baptism. **N.B.** the baptism is not mainly meant to provide an intensely personal benefit, but rather a flow of ministry outwards from the heart towards other people. Why do you think that the ministry of the Spirit is described as, "Rivers of living water"?
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4. The baptism in the Spirit is received by asking God for it

1. Read **Luke 11:9-13**. This passage tells us how we receive the baptism with the Spirit. **N.B.** The action of 'asking' in this passage cannot be referring to the initial experience with the Holy Spirit at salvation because at that time we don't have to ask for the Spirit because he automatically takes up residence in us when we repent and give our hearts to Christ. In this passage Jesus describes the actions we need to take if we want the baptism. What are they?
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2. What example does Jesus use to drive the point home to us that our Heavenly Father will never refuse to give us his Holy Spirit? (V 11-13)
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N.B. Don't ever fear that God, your Father, will not direct Jesus to baptise you in the Holy Spirit! Also, you cannot place God and the operation of His Holy Spirit into a box! There are stories of people who receive the baptism without being prayed for or them specifically asking for the baptism.

3. Read Galatians 3:2 and then write down the key to us receiving the Spirit.
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N.B. All God expects us to do is exercise faith and ask Him for the Spirit.

5. Receiving the Baptism in the Spirit

1. Relax! Don't allow yourself to become tense and doubtful; you do not have to wait for years to receive the baptism in the Spirit or doubt whether it is for you. Read **Mark 16:17** and write down who Jesus said would speak in new languages/tongues:
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2. Make sure that you have complied with the only scriptural condition for the baptism in the Spirit, which is to be born again i.e. you have confessed your sin, repented and have given your heart and life to Jesus.

N.B. your salvation is received by faith.

3. Believe that the baptism is a free gift and cannot be earned by achieving a certain level of holiness and goodness – and be ready to receive it.
 4. Although nothing prevents you from receiving the baptism on your own, it is suggested that you allow a Spirit-filled leader to lay hands on to receive the baptism – as happened in the early church. (**Acts 8:17; 19:6**)
 5. You should be in an attitude of worship when you receive the baptism. Focus your attention and worship on Jesus, as he is the baptiser. (**Matthew 3:11-12**)
 6. Actually, ask Jesus to baptise you with the Spirit, to fill you to overflowing. Read **James 4: 2-3** and write down the two reasons James gives for us not receiving what we want:
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7. As you sense the presence and fullness of God within you, open your mouth and speak the strange words that God has placed in your mind.

N.B. No human can speak through a closed mouth!

8. Don't feel embarrassed if you only speak one or two words of a new language, as a full language will come later with practice.

N.B. a child starts to speak its parents' language by uttering only one or two words!

6. The purpose or reasons for speaking in tongues

1. It is evidence that we have been baptised/filled with the Holy Spirit and should gives us confidence that we can serve and minister in the fullness of God's power. Read **Acts 4:31** and write down what happened after the disciples were filled with the Spirit:

2. It allows us to connect with God at a deep spiritual level. Read **1 Corinthians 14: 2** and explain what is the downside of this spiritual communion?

3. It is the language of high praise – we speak in tongues when we run out of human word to praise and worship God.

4. When we pray in tongues, we often unlock the gifts of revelation – the words of knowledge, wisdom discerning of spirits and prophecy (**1 Corinthians 12:8,10**) We can confidently expect the Holy Spirit to give us supernatural insight because of the way Jesus describes him, "He is the Holy Spirit, who leads us into all truth." (John 14:17) Read **1 Corinthians 14:15** and write down the two ways that we should pray and explain how they work together

E.g. while you are praying in tongues, the Spirit may give you a picture or impression about a person who has a problem and this will direct you how to pray with your mind or understanding.

5. Praying tongues in our private prayer or praise time is vitally important because it strengthens and builds us up to flourish and serve God according to his plan for our lives and his kingdom, despite life's challenges and distractions. (**1 Corinthians 14:4**) Read **Jude 20**. What does Jude say we should do when we pray in the Spirit?

N.B. Prayer in words + prayer in the Spirit (Tongues) = built up faith.

6. Prayer in tongues will open our spiritual understanding to see the truth found in scripture in a fresh and living way. As Jesus said, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth." (**John 16:13**) In **1 Corinthians 2:13-14**, Paul explained why it is so important for us to be spiritually connected to God when we read the scripture. Why can't people who are not spiritual really understand the truth of God's word?

7. Praying in tongues helps us to pray more accurately. Read **Romans 8:26-28** and answer the following questions:

a. What is this “weakness” that we have and why do we have it?

b. How does the Holy Spirit help us in this weakness as we pray in tongues?

N.B. Prayer is the most powerful and serious thing we can do because God captures every prayer we make! On many issues or decisions, we can't possibly know how to pray accurately because of our human limitations. How wonderful it is to know that the Holy Spirit is willing to pray on our behalf in line with God's perfect knowledge and will.

7. The baptism in the Spirit must lead to us using God's power for effective witness and ministry

1. In **Acts 1:8** Jesus declared that we would receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon us. What did Jesus say would happen once this deposit of power is received?

2. Christians often celebrate the moment of being filled with the Spirit as if it is the high point of our experience with the Holy Spirit, rather than the beginning of a great adventure with God that includes supernatural manifestations of God's power. Read the story of the spectacular healing of a lame man at the temple gate in Acts 3: 1-8. Peter was full of faith in God and he used a gift of healing to heal a man who had been lame from birth.

a. What did Peter say to him?

b. Then what did Peter do and what was the outcome?

3. The display of Holy Spirit power became the standard during the early church ministry. Paul made it clear that his gospel message came to them, *“Not only with words but also with power, for the Holy Spirit gave you full assurance that what we said was true.”* (1 Thessalonians 1:5) Read **Romans 15:19**, where Paul explained how he fully presented the good news. How did he convince the people of his message?
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Personal Application ▪

1. Now that you know that the baptism or infilling of the Spirit has purpose, write down some of the good works God has planned for you. (Ephesians 2:10) Explain how the power of the Spirit will help you to serve and minister with success.
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D] The ministry of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit releases the spiritual power necessary to transform us on the inside

1. We are taught that the Holy Spirit has a very exciting role to play: He has been given the task to make sure that the purposes of God are achieved in the age in which we live. Transformation is a big part of God’s purpose and the Spirit’s ministry because it is part of our human destiny. Read **Romans 8:29**, which confirms the amazing truth that, before creation, God already knew everyone who would repent and give their hearts to Jesus i.e. God is omniscient - he knows absolutely everything that has or will happen. Based on this knowledge, God has chosen and called us to reach a very important destiny. Read verse 29 again and explain what that destiny is:
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2. The problem we face is that, in our own strength, we are incapable of becoming like Christ. None of us can overcome our sins and shortcomings without God’s supernatural help. Even if we exercise self-control and change our actions, only God can change our hearts, through his Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, in **Ezekiel 36:26-27**, God gave a promise that was fulfilled when Jesus sent the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost; that He will give us both the desire and ability to be transformed. Read those two verses and write down exactly what the Spirit does inside of us:
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3. Read **Galatians 5:16-25** and **Romans 8: 4-11**. Both these passages confirm that the Holy Spirit gives us power to overcome our sinful natures and so live victorious Christian lives. Paul, who was the writer of the letters sent to the Roman and Galatian Christians, describes this as *“living by the Spirit”*. Paul explained in Romans 8:13 that, through the power of the Spirit we must, *“Put to death the deeds of our sinful nature.”* He said it slightly differently in Galatians 5:25. *“Those who belong to Christ have nailed the passions and desires of the sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there.”* We can only do this through the power of the Holy Spirit! What exactly does this mean?
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N.B. Never forget that we can only transform to become like Christ through the help of the Holy Spirit! (**2 Corinthians 3:18**) Paul was confident that every Christian is able to overcome the sinful nature and fulfil the purposes of God. What did he proclaim in **Philippians 4:13**?

The Holy Spirit connects our minds to the mind of God

1. The mind plays a vital role in the wellbeing of every individual, especially a Christian. Our minds have to be protected because they are very vulnerable to temptation. For some reason, God has allowed Satan access to our minds so we can never actually avoid temptation; we can only deal with it through the power of God’s word and the Holy Spirit. E.g. Jesus’ temptation. (**Luke 4:1-13**). Sometimes, out of the blue, Satan bombards us with the most horrible thoughts and images, which make us feel very uneasy. Of course temptation itself is not sin! However, not all temptation comes from the devil. Temptation also comes from the desires of our sinful nature and starts in our minds: thoughts, memories, images, attitudes and ways of thinking that are not from God. Read **James 1: 14-15**, which explains the downward spiral that occurs when we continue to entertain sinful thoughts. What is the meaning of the statement that *when sin is allowed to mature, it gives birth to death*?
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2. Thinking patterns and reasoning that are sinful must be dealt with promptly and firmly otherwise they create strongholds in the mind that are not humanly possible to destroy. I.e. The problem progresses from being a matter of wrong thinking to become a spiritual problem. The truth is that unbelievers are naturally incapable of understanding and receiving the good news of the gospel. [This also applies to Christians who have allowed themselves to be deceived either by Satan or the arguments of men e.g. **2 Corinthians 11:3; Colossians 2:4**] Read **2 Corinthians 4:4** and explain why it is that the gospel message and God’s truth is not understood:
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3. So, spiritual strongholds in the mind probably represent the biggest challenge that the church of Jesus Christ has to face. The Holy Spirit is the only answer to this problem, which is why Jesus instructed his disciples to wait until the Day of Pentecost before commencing their ministry. The Apostle Paul confidently proclaimed that God has given us mighty spiritual weapons to knock down these strongholds. Read **2 Corinthians 10:3-5**. Write down what you think these “*Mighty weapons*” are:

4. Paul gave us one of his most significant instructions and made one of his wisest observations in **Romans 12:2**. Paul said that we would learn to know God’s perfect will if we make a decision to do two important things. What are those two things?

5. From a practical point of view, how do you think the Spirit transforms our thinking?

The Holy Spirit is Our Supernatural Teacher of Truth

1. Read **John 15: 26; 16:13** concerning the ministry of the Holy Spirit

- a. What name has been given to the Holy Spirit in both verses?

- b. Why is the Spirit called, “The Advocate”?

2. The Holy Spirit only gives out revelation that he receives directly from the Father and Jesus, and so preserves the unity of God’s word. Jesus promised that the Spirit would guide his disciples into all truth. What is that truth? (Paul explains this in **1 Corinthians 2: 9-12**)

3. In John 16:13 Jesus made a statement to the effect that the Holy Spirit would tell us about the future – understandable because the Holy Spirit is omniscient and knows everything. What is the purpose of the Holy Spirit telling us about the future, and then helping us to pray the right prayers concerning the future? (You might find some of your answer in **Romans 8: 26-28**)

4. In **1 Corinthians 12:7-11**, Paul gives a list of spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to us so that we can minister to people in a supernatural way e.g. the gift of healing. We use this gift by laying hands on a sick person while we pray and then the Holy Spirit miraculously heals him or her. There are three of these gifts that fall under the heading, *'Truth revealed by the Holy Spirit.'* I am going to give you the descriptions contained in the New International Version (NIV) and would like you to explain what you think these gifts are:

a. Word or message of knowledge (V.8)

b. Word or message of wisdom (V.8)

c. Discerning or distinguishing between spirits (V.10)



Personal Application ▪

1. Isn't it wonderful to know that we don't have to walk alone, without any guidance, but that we have the Holy Spirit as our counsellor and mentor, just like Jesus was to his disciples. We have a teacher who will show us the way, remind us of Jesus' teachings and lead us into God's truth for our lives. Write down a situation you are in where you need the Spirit's guidance and ask him for leadership that will result in success that brings glory to God.

The Holy Spirit takes the role of our protector

The moment we give our hearts to Christ we become a target of relentless attack by Satan, who is determined to get us back into his kingdom. Scripture assures us that he doesn't have the power to snatch us out of God's hand (**John 10:28**). Satan tries to destabilize us through difficulty, trials and negative thoughts. If he can discourage and humiliate us completely, there is a chance that we will fall away and return to him out of our own accord.

1. New Christians don't realize how Satan operates, and established Christians often forget. There are two important descriptions of the devil that we must keep in mind because he builds his strategies around these descriptions.

a. John 8:44

b. Revelation 12:10

Satan speaks loud and often to our minds, (Persistent thoughts) and he also uses people to speak negative words over our lives. He tells us that we are not good enough for God, we are not saved, and nobody loves us, especially God. Whenever we do wrong, he accuses us until we are enveloped and dragged down by shame.

2. God has not left us to live our Christian lives in a state of doubt and vulnerability. He has called us to live victorious lives. John made a positive statement that every child of God defeats this evil world and achieves this victory through faith. (1 John 5:4)

N.B. The key to our victory is found in the inner presence of the Holy Spirit.

- a. Paul was very specific about where the Holy Spirit lives i.e. has his base or 'office' from where he ministers outwards to the world. Read **1 Corinthians 3:16** and write down exactly where the Spirit lives.
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- b. Read **Romans 8:15-17**, which explains why we are able to confidentially address God as, "Abba Father" - an intimate way for a child to address its father. We also become confident that we are heirs of God's glory together with Christ. What role does the Holy Spirit play in all of this? (V.16)
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- c. It is so important for every Christian to be constantly aware of the inner presence of the Holy Spirit because this actually identifies us as a child of God – and Satan cannot take that identification away! (**Ephesians 1:13-14**) I am going to quote verse 13 from the NIV, "*When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.*" So, the Holy Spirit is sent to us by God as our seal to give us an assurance of eternal life. As a "seal", He performs three very important functions in our lives.

- i. **A deposit** or pledge i.e. the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives acts as a guarantee that God will keep His promise to give us an incredible inheritance in the next life, when we will be released from our sinful, decaying bodies and will receive brand new glorified bodies. (**Romans 8:18-23**)
- ii. **A mark of ownership:** in biblical days a person would place his unique seal on an item to indicate his personal ownership of that item. Similarly, the Holy Spirit works in our lives so that we become like Christ and display His unique characteristics – and therefore bear His stamp to the world.
- iii. **Provides security** – an owner who sealed his property had every right to protect his possession as he saw fit. Similarly, the Spirit helps to protect us from deception, sin and destruction. Neither Satan nor man can break God's seal of promise over our lives. Our confidence comes from allowing the Spirit to do his full job in our lives. What message of confidence does Paul give us in **Romans 8:38-39**?

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- d. **The moment we are born again the Holy Spirit comes to live or reside in our human bodies.** However, just as a man can live in his own house and not be allowed by his family to exercise leadership in the home, so the Holy Spirit can live within and be prevented by us from taking rightful control of our lives. **N.B.** the Holy Spirit is sensitive and does not force his leadership onto us; we have a personal choice. However, if we refuse to be led by Him, we cannot claim to be sons of God. Read Romans 8:14 and write down the very important sign that we are God's children:
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Conclusion

From our study today, we can see how crucial the indwelling Holy Spirit is to our growth and spiritual wellbeing. Make a decision to give priority to your relationship with the Spirit and become determined to make him your leader – as he is the best leader in the universe!