



HOLY SPIRIT

C O U R S E

B O O K L E T



SESSION 1: Who or what is the Holy Spirit?

1. The Holy Spirit is a person – not just a power!

- **He has opinions.** Read Acts 15:24-28 again. How do you think the leaders of the Early Church became aware of how the Spirit was feeling about these issues?
- **He speaks to us.** In John 14:26 Jesus promised that the Spirit would teach his followers and remind them of the things that Jesus had said. One way the Holy Spirit speaks to us today is through **the Bible – the Word of God**. The Spirit also speaks directly to our spirits (Romans 8:16) telling us that we belong to God. How do you feel that the Spirit speaks to you?
- **He leads people.** Look at Romans 8:14 again. Do you feel that the Holy Spirit has led you? If so, how?
- **He has feelings.** In Ephesians 4:30 Paul warns us not to grieve the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit in Galatians chapter 5 also includes emotions such as love, joy and peace etc. An impersonal power doesn't have feelings!

So, if this Holy Spirit is a person, then what kind of person is He?

2. The Holy Spirit is divine – He is God!

The Holy Spirit is the third person in the Trinity, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son. There is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, but these are not three gods but one!

These divine attributes mean that:

- The Spirit is all powerful.
- The Spirit is all knowing.
- The Spirit is present everywhere.

3. The Holy Spirit inspired the scriptures

In 2 Timothy 3:16 the phrase 'God-breathed' uses the word picture of the Spirit breathing into the Scriptures. Read 2 Peter 1:20-21. What do you think it means that the Old Testament prophets were 'carried along by the Holy Spirit'?

4. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of mission

Mission is in the heart of God, - He is a sending God. After his resurrection Jesus met the disciples and breathed on them, saying 'Receive the Holy Spirit', having just told them 'As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you' (John 20:21-22). This was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost when the disciples were equipped to become witnesses for Jesus (Acts 1:8). If Jesus himself needed the baptism in the Holy Spirit to fulfil his calling, how much more do we?

5. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of promise

Peter said that that Jesus has 'received the promised Holy Spirit from the Father and has poured Him out', Acts 2:33. Here are some of the precious Bible promises concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit. Read these verses and see that the Holy Spirit is promised to you:

- **Joel 2:28-29** *'And afterwards, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days'.*
- **Matthew 3:11** *'John the Baptist said; "I baptise you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire".'*
- **Acts 1:5 & 8** *'Jesus said; "For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth".'*
- **Acts 2:38-39** *'Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call".'*

For discussion

- What do you think the main point of the Day of Pentecost was for the early Christians?
- What does the Day of Pentecost mean for you today?
- 'We might be orthodox in our theology but cessationist in our experience', what do you think this means? ('cessationist' is a term for people who do not accept that the miracles in the New Testament occur today). Does this describe your own experience?
- Have you ever experienced a 'Pentecost' moment of being filled with the Holy Spirit? If so, what changes came about because of it?
- Looking at Acts 1:8, what do you think the main purpose of being baptised in the Holy Spirit really is?



SESSION 2: The Baptism in the Holy Spirit

God is a God of mission, and he had always planned that the good news of salvation through Jesus, his death and resurrection, should be shared throughout the Earth!

So, how were these defeated, discouraged believers going to achieve that, when their founder and leader had just been cruelly executed, and their doors were locked because of their fear of the Jews? The answer was 'The Baptism in the Holy Spirit'. Read about this in **Acts 2:1-4**.

The promise of the Holy Spirit was given to men and women who were already believers (**Acts 1:8**). They had been chosen to be witnesses of the life and teachings of Jesus. In **John 20:22** Jesus breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit', so the Spirit was already at work in their lives. Yet, they needed a further, deeper, more powerful experience of the Spirit to fulfil their mission and calling. This became known as 'the baptism in the Holy Spirit', although other terms such as 'being filled with the Spirit' are also widely used to refer to the same experience.

Jesus was giving His followers power for service

'The baptism with the Spirit is always associated primarily and specifically with witness and testimony and service' (Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones). There were four other occasions in the Book of Acts when people were baptised in the Holy Spirit:

- **Acts 8:15-17** Revival in Samaria.
- **Acts 9:17-18** Saul of Tarsus is filled with the Holy Spirit.
- **Acts 10:44-46** The Roman Centurion Cornelius gets filled with the Spirit.
- **Acts 19:1-7 12** Christians at Ephesus are filled with the Spirit.

Just as we know when someone has been baptised in water – they are usually soaking wet! – so we should know when we have been baptised in the Holy Spirit! It should show. For most of the cases in Acts that meant that they spoke in other tongues and prophesied. But we are all individuals – the important thing is that there should be evidence of the Spirit's working.

'If there is a guiding principle in understanding what happens when God touches someone, it seems to be that God treats people as individuals, each having a unique history, unique problems, and a unique calling from his or her Creator.' John White.

Read John 7:37-39. Are you thirsty for more of the river of God's blessing in your life?

Jesus still gives this power to those who ask Him!

Read the few verses in **Luke 11:9-13**. They were written about the gift of the Holy Spirit as well as about prayer. 'Ask, seek and knock', Jesus said, 'and you will receive'. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is not for those who are good enough, or for those who are clever, but for all who come to Jesus and ask for it! This is where faith comes in – faith is a response to God's invitation. We come to Jesus by faith and ask Him to fill us with His Spirit, and He will!

For discussion

- What were the evidence(s) of the baptism in the Holy Spirit in the life of the Early Church?
- What changes happened in the early Christian community after Pentecost (Acts 2:42-47)?
- Why do you think that 'boldness' seems to have marked the early Christians following the Day of Pentecost? (Acts 4:29 & 31, 9:28, 13:46, 14:3, 18:26, 19:8 & 28:31).
- What do you think might prevent people from seeking their own 'baptism in the Holy Spirit' today?
- How would you answer these reservations?



SESSION 3: Supernatural Lifestyle 1

Within days of being baptised in the Holy Spirit thousands of people in Jerusalem were being converted and added to the church. The experience of being filled with the Spirit transformed lives and communities.

The baptism in the Holy Spirit in Acts

- After his resurrection, Jesus told his followers to wait for the power of the Spirit (Acts 1:4-5)
- The Holy Spirit would give them power to be witnesses for Jesus everywhere (Acts 1:8)
- The early Christians were first baptised in the Spirit at Pentecost, when they first spoke in tongues (Acts 2)
- Peter promised the same experience to all who would repent and follow Jesus, and that day 3,000 people were converted to Christ (Acts 2:38-39)
- There are at least 5 occasions in Acts when people were baptised in the Holy Spirit

After being baptised in the Spirit the believers were filled with boldness and spread out in obedience to the orders Jesus had given them. Within a few weeks loads of people were getting saved and being added to the church. Then, within just a few short years new churches were being formed throughout the then known world, and we learn from some of the letters in the New Testament, that the people who formed those newly planted fellowships were living ‘supernatural lives’.

Read 1 Corinthians chapter 12 verses 8-11

In these verses the apostle Paul gives us a glimpse into what supernatural living might look like for those who have been filled with the Holy Spirit. Three of these spiritual gifts or special abilities relate to spoken communication – communicating with God, hearing from God, and sharing what we hear with other people. The gifts of tongues and prophecy, sometimes accompanied by the gift of interpretation of tongues, are all

involved in this idea of talking to God, hearing from Him, and responding to what we feel He is saying.

The gift of tongues

- Why do you think that God chose the gift of tongues as part of the launch of the Christian church and its life down the centuries even right up until today?

Away of worship: Acts 2:11 *'...we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!'*

Many who speak in tongues find that it really enriches their worshipping experience as they allow the Spirit to adore the Lord through them, sometimes in speech but also in singing. The Apostle Paul said that he used to sing in the Spirit a lot! (1 Corinthians 14:15).

A powerful prayer tool

1 Corinthians 14:2 Paul says that when speaking in tongues people were speaking to God and uttering mysteries in the Spirit. The apostle also explains that praying in tongues bypasses our understanding with all its questions and fears. Read Romans 8:26 where Paul explains this a little further. So, praying in the Spirit is something that works when facing needs beyond our understanding, even transcending the language barrier!

A way of building up our spiritual life. 1 Corinthians 14:4 *'So a person "speaking in tongues" helps himself grow spiritually.'*

Well-known pastor and writer R. T. Kendall tells in his book 'In Pursuit of His Glory'¹ that once, when he was passing through a really tough period in his life and ministry, he felt that God was calling him to stir up the gift of tongues he had received many years before and so he started praying in tongues privately again. This is how he describes what happened as a result.

'Things did not dramatically improve overnight, but I was soon to witness the sweetest sense of God I had known [for many years]. The joy was indescribable. I have been speaking in tongues ever since. It began with my making an effort; it led to effortless peace and joy. I have never looked back'. **R. T. KENDALL**

The gift of interpretation of tongues

In some churches there will also be an occasional message in tongues, either in the main services or perhaps in a small group, and in these circumstances, as Paul teaches in first Corinthians 14, there will need to be an interpretation so that everybody present can profit or be encouraged by what they hear. This means sharing the burden of what the Holy Spirit is saying through the person speaking in tongues rather than translating it word for word. Like with the gift of prophecy, which we will consider next time, tongues

¹ R T Kendall, *In Pursuit of His Glory* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 2002) 153-154

with its accompanying gift of interpretation, is a special way of groups of believers building each other up and sensing the presence of God through His Spirit.

Hearing from God – The gift of prophecy

Read: 1 Corinthians 14:3 '*..the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort.*'

Prophecy in the New Testament seems to fulfil a slightly different function to the one that it did in the Old Testament, where much prophecy was focussed on foretelling the future, or declaring the judgement of God. In the Early Church it seems that prophecy had become a way of hearing God speak in ways that help and build others up – maybe forthtelling rather than foretelling.

We can hear from God when Spirit-filled men and women teach and preach from God's Word, but it can add such a sense of the presence of God when others prophesy and share words and pictures they are receiving from the Spirit too. Paul encouraged this use of the Holy Spirit's gift of prophecy so that 'everyone may be instructed and encouraged'.

For discussion

- Why do you think God chose the gift of tongues as a sign of the fullness of the Holy Spirit?
- What does the gift of tongues mean to you?
- What are three main goals of the gift of prophecy given by Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:3?
- In what ways does the New Testament gift of prophecy seem to differ from its use in the Old Testament?
- How should we respond if a 'word' is given, or prophecy shared that seems to contradict the clear teaching of Scripture?
- Read: 1 Corinthians 14:31 – does it seem to you that Paul is encouraging the use of the gift of prophecy here? If so, with what purposes and/or restrictions?



SESSION 4: Supernatural Lifestyle 2

The apostle Paul sets out some teaching about the body of Christ, the church, which will help us to grasp the context in which his further writing about the gifts of the Holy Spirit can be set.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-20

God has given different gifts to His church so that we can all be involved in serving, helping, and building up the kingdom of God in our unique and different ways. Our tasks and ministries may be different to those of others but are no less important to what God is doing through his church, the body of Christ. And these gifts are given for the common good, not so that we can become spiritual superstars, in fact that's why the gifts are widely spread amongst God's people, available to all, and not summed up in one person.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:7-9

Gifts of healing

The Bible teaches that sickness and death entered God's perfect creation when humanity first chose to sin in the case of Adam and Eve in the book of Genesis. But - our God is a healing God and throughout the Bible and by the ministry of the Holy Spirit today, he wants to reach out and touch sick people with his healing power through you and me. God has shown His heart towards us in Christ, and by His Spirit He wants to give us the power to go out and bring healing to others.

Jesus said: 'Heal those who are ill, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give' Matthew 10:8.

The gift of faith

And that's also where the gift of faith comes in, because we might see a need in someone else's life, for healing or for God to show His power to them in some way but may be held back by fear of offending them if we ask to pray for them, or even because

we wonder if God will answer our prayer at all! If we have received the baptism in the Holy Spirit though, and are walking in the Spirit, then in that moment God can gift us a gift of faith to overcome our fears!

God can also give the gift of faith to sustain a Spirit-filled believer through long-term trials or difficulties, or perhaps persecution, so it may not always be to do with healing.

A message of knowledge or wisdom

These gifts of the Spirit are a means of receiving information by the Spirit that we could never have known ourselves and can often unlock very difficult and challenging circumstances. The gifts of the Spirit can also become the key to perseverance under trials of all kinds.

Knowledge is the imparting of information that could not be known by the Spirit-filled believer without this gift, and wisdom is the awareness of what to do with that knowledge, or what God's heart and will is in any given situation. But these gifts are fragmentary – given to meet a specific challenge or moment in the believer's life. They are not intended to make us the fount of all knowledge and wisdom. The gifts are a means of receiving information by the Spirit that we could never have known ourselves and can often unlock very difficult and challenging circumstances.

What amazing spiritual gifts!

Miracles

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12 about the ability to see miracles happen. Some healings may also be miracles, though not all, because God will often use medical means or the body's own ability to recover more quickly than expected, in answer to our prayers.

And there can be amazing interventions of God in other areas of our lives outside of health. Such as - miracles of Divine provision to meet our financial needs and the needs of others through our generosity; miracles of Divine protection, in other words God delivering us from danger, and miracles of guidance and even what some people might describe as coincidences, but we can see the hand of God in those situations. As with all the gifts of the Spirit these come to us through prayer, asking God and seeking Him, and being filled with the Spirit.

Distinguishing between 'spirits'

In his handbook of Christian Theology, the Bible teacher Wayne Grudem describes this spiritual gift in a helpful way:

'Distinguishing between spirits is a special ability to recognise the influence of the Holy Spirit or of demonic spirits in a person'².

² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (IVP, Leicester, 1994) 1082

For an example of this happening in the New Testament read Acts 16:16-18.

We really need this gift of discernment today because of some of the cultural attacks on Christianity, and the numbers of people who are messing with the occult or the paranormal to find spiritual experiences that might satisfy the longings in their hearts but failing badly. These are counterfeit, and the fact that Satan makes such imitations of spiritual things should not surprise us. When fraudsters make counterfeits, they don't usually copy things of low value, only the highest value notes. God gives us the Divine equipment we need for this battle by the gifts of his Holy Spirit.

For discussion

- Why do you think that 'gifts of healing' are in the plural in 1 Corinthians 12:9?
- Look at the source of faith in Romans 10:17. How does that link to the 'gift of faith' Paul writes about in 1 Corinthians 12? Could recalling appropriate Bible verses at times of special need or stress perhaps become a 'gift of faith'?
- Have you experienced anything that could be described as a miracle? If so, why not share that now?
- Why do you think there is such a lot of interest in the occult and the supernatural today?
- What would you say to a Christian who is becoming fascinated with horoscopes or using a Ouija board?
- Do you know anyone who needs your prayers to be able to live in the right kind of the supernatural?



SESSION 5: Supernatural Lifestyle 3

Read Galatians 5:22-25

Love, joy and peace

Jesus told his disciples that his followers should love one another, (John 12:34-35). Early commentators about the church noted how much these Christians love each other, (Tertullian 160-220AD). One of the most significant areas where love is required is forgiveness. The Holy Spirit can give us the power to forgive as his love is poured into our hearts, (Romans 5:5).

The early Pentecostals of the last century were part of a movement that was marked by great joy and enthusiasm. This was expressed in an avalanche of new songs and choruses that proclaimed the gospel and exalted the Lord. It seems that there is a real link between being baptised in the Holy Spirit and an experience of joy, sometimes even leading to hilarious laughter or even tears of joy!

Just before going to the cross, Jesus told his disciples that they would have peace. (*'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid'* John 14:27.) It can be a powerful witness when Christians remain calm and trust in God in circumstances that would otherwise cause real panic. The Holy Spirit grows this fruit of peace in our hearts.

Patience, kindness and goodness

Patience is linked to peace, really, as it is the outflow of inner peace. Our God is a patient God, and by his Spirit we can be equipped to wait for his perfect timing. A patient person can endure much pain and suffering holding on to God's promises. A patient person is slow to anger as they wait for God to work in their life.

There is transforming power in the simple fruit of kindness and Christians have been discovering how effective this can be in their own lives and families, as well as in churches and communities. Debbie Duncan says: *'This kindness is explosive. It's not meek and humble – it blasts a huge hole in the bleakness of death, letting in light, tearing down curtains, rolling away huge boulders. It takes command of death and casts*

it aside. It's powerful, extraordinary, mind-blowing. It changes the lives of men and women, boys and girls who have come to know that God is kind, sending his son to die the worst death imaginable for us'.³

The spiritual fruit of goodness, as described in Galatians 5:22-23, is not merely moral behaviour but an excellence of character, an uprightness of heart and life. It's characterised by actions motivated by a desire to help others, seeking their benefit over self-interest. This goodness reflects God's nature, expressed through righteous actions and a desire to be a blessing to others.

Faithfulness, gentleness and self-control

'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.' Matthew 5:5-9

In addition to kindness, and patience, wouldn't it be great to see evidence of real gentleness and self-control in our relationships and even our church business meetings? It's hard to convince others of the love and patience of God, and his amazing grace, if we are constantly flying off the handle ourselves, or if we have a very short fuse.

And self-control is also an important part of our discipleship when it comes to our personal walk and keeping in a place of holiness and readiness to serve God instead of following our own lusts and desires. This spiritual fruit might make all the difference the next time temptation strikes, or we're faced with an opportunity to sin that might seem otherwise to be so seductive and attractive. (See the story of Joseph in Genesis 39.)

For further study and discussion

- **Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.** What does Paul prize above tongues, prophecy, and knowledge? Why do you think that even prophecy, faith and self-sacrifice are put below love in these verses?
- **Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.** What characteristics of love does Paul describe here? How might these aspects of character affect church and/or family life?
- **Read: 1 Corinthians 13:8-13.** How does Paul help us to keep the gifts of the Spirit in a right perspective?
- How has the spiritual fruit of kindness affected you? Who do you know who really seems to exemplify the presence of this fruit in their lives?
- What biblical examples can you think of that exhibit or illustrate 'gentleness and self-control'?

³Debbie Duncan & Cathy Le Feuvre, *The Gift of Kindness*, (Authentic Media, Milton Keynes, 2022) 19.



SESSION 6: How to be filled with the Holy Spirit

How much does It cost?

It cost Jesus everything but is free for the asking to us. Every gift of God flows to us from the cross, and when we receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord, then the Holy Spirit begins the amazing work of the new birth in our hearts. That's why, on the first Day of Pentecost, in Acts chapter two, Peter told the people that they needed to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

'Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.' (Acts 2:38-9.)

That final part of the statement in which Peter said *'For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call'* must surely include us today who are far-off in terms of time and distance from those first-century followers of Jesus. In hearing and believing the gospel we are those whom the Lord our God has called.

The act of repenting – turning away from our sins – and receiving Jesus as Lord, which is symbolised by being baptised in water, is key to receiving the free gift of all that the Holy Spirit wants to do in our lives. But, once we do know Jesus and are following him, we soon become aware of the need for more power in our lives, power to be witnesses for the Lord, and that's where the baptism in the Holy Spirit comes in.

'And it's not just power for miracles. It's so that the power-charged atmosphere of Heaven can rest upon a person, which forces a shift in the atmosphere over a home, business, or city. This baptism (in the Holy Spirit) is to make us living witnesses and examples of the resurrection of Jesus – the ultimate display of Heaven's power'.

Bill Johnson ⁴

⁴ Bill Johnson, *Hosting the Presence*, (Destiny Image Publishers, Shippensburg PA, 2012) 107.

How can I get hold of this power?

1. **Make Jesus Lord of your life.** Here is a prayer you might pray: *'Lord Jesus Christ, I am sorry for the things that I have done wrong in my life' – maybe take a few moments here just to ask for His forgiveness of anything that you really become aware of – 'Please forgive me. I now turn away from anything that I know to be wrong, against You or Your way for my life. Thank you that You died on the cross for me so that I could be forgiven and set free. Please come into my life and reign over my heart from this day on. Thank you, Lord, for saving me. Amen'*
2. **'Get hungry and thirsty'.** Jesus said that we need to get hungry and thirsty for more from God. He made this really clear in John 7:37 when he went to Jerusalem to be part of the Festival of Tabernacles. During this harvest thanksgiving feast for the Jewish people there would be a moment when water would be poured out by the High Priest as an act of worship. Just then, *'on the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink". the responsibility is on us to hear God's Word, get thirsty and come to Jesus to be filled with the living water of His Spirit.* The responsibility is on us to hear God's Word, get thirsty and come to Jesus to be filled with the living water of His Spirit.
3. **'Come to Jesus and drink!'** This means pray – ask Jesus for the baptism in the Holy Spirit! Seek him on your own or with others or ask someone who has received the baptism in the Holy Spirit to pray with you and for you. It really is that simple.
4. **'Ask, seek and knock'.** In Luke's gospel Jesus said, *'ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?'* And then here's the crunch line *'If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!'* (Luke 11:9-13).

Dealing with doubt

We need to humble ourselves and choose to believe God's Word and the promises of Jesus more than we believe our own doubts! This is true of every step that a Christian will take in their discipleship. Our whole way of life in Christ is a choice to believe God's promises and stand on his Word. There is no other way for the follower of Christ to function. Doubts will always be there while we are in these bodies, and live in an unbelieving community, just as the early Christians did. Receiving the power of the Holy Spirit is just another step of faith in the life of faith.

The problem of fear

Some are just afraid of the Holy Spirit or their own emotions, but Jesus asks us to trust his amazing love for his children. If we ask for a fish, he would not give us a snake! *'Every gift God freely gives us is good and perfect, streaming down from the Father of lights, who shines from the heavens with no hidden shadow or darkness and is never subject to change'* (James 1:17 The Passion Translation). The gift of the Holy Spirit is definitely a good gift.

The issue of inadequacy

We need to know who we truly are in Christ and that he longs to bless us and give us his best gifts. In Luke 11:12 God delights to give the Holy Spirit to “those who ask for him” not to those who deserve him! In a sense, none of us deserve anything at all from God, but through his amazing grace we have been saved, through faith, and really that means he waits for us to ‘ask him’! God’s answer to our sense of inadequacy is that he has made us adequate in Christ.

For discussion, further study and reflection

- Take time to read again these relevant Bible passages relating to the Spirit: Joel 2:28-32, Luke 3:16, 11:9-13, Acts 1:4-8, Acts 2:1-4, Ephesians 5:18-20.
- What do you think are the main hindrances to being filled with the Holy Spirit today?
- Look at Joel 2:28 and ask yourself ‘how old does someone have to be to be filled with the Spirit’?
- How would you answer the suggestion that the miraculous is not for today?
- Find someone you can trust to share your own experience of the Lord with. (Romans 10:9)



SESSION 7: Living by the Spirit

“So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.” Galatians 5:16.

This means a life that is guided by the Holy Spirit rather than by one's own desires or sinful nature. It's about being led and empowered by the Holy Spirit in daily life, reflecting God's will through your actions, thoughts, and decisions.

What does ‘the flesh’ mean in Galatians 5:16? It refers to the sinful nature, or that part of us that is prone to selfishness, sin, and rebellion against God. Living by the Spirit involves surrendering to the Holy Spirit's influence, which helps us to live in alignment with God's commands and to feel his love. The concept of ‘living by the Spirit’ also connects to spiritual growth and maturity. When we're living by the Spirit, we begin to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit that we have already been speaking about and see in Galatians 5:22-23, things like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and self-control. These qualities become more evident in our lives as we continually rely on the Holy Spirit's guidance.

Make a daily choice. *‘Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God - truly righteous and holy.’* Ephesians 4:21.

The renewing of our minds. Paul says that we can be *‘transformed by the renewing of our mind’* (Romans 12:2). Romans 8:1 also deals with the ‘shame’ pandemic. *‘Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.’* There's a huge problem today with the issue of shame. It's a big thing among young people currently and is a significant concern. Several factors contribute to the prominence of shame in modern youth, especially in the context of social media, mental health, and societal pressures. The message of ‘no condemnation’ and of acceptance of us by God in Christ, however, because of the work of Jesus on the cross, is a powerful one. And Paul says that it's the Spirit who gives us this life free from the condemnation of God and our shame.

The spirit of holiness. The Holy Spirit points us to the cross where Jesus died to cleanse us and make us holy. He can give us the power to live holy lives, separated for the service of God.

The spirit sets us free from fear. *‘The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.* Romans 8:15-16. Paul also taught about the problem of fear in his second letter to young Timothy. *‘For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline’.* (2 Timothy 1:7 New Living Translation).

The spirit gives us power to witness for Christ. *‘you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth’*, Acts 1:8. The original New Testament word for ‘witnesses’ is the same as we use for martyrdom, or suffering for our faith, and it reminds us that there is a price to be paid for reaching out to others with the good news of the gospel. When the Holy Spirit fills us, he equips us with boldness, wisdom, and power to face that pressure and still to step out in God’s name. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of mission!

The spirit helps us in our prayer lives. *‘In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God’*, Romans 8:26-27. This is where the anointing of the Spirit can really propel our praying forward, perhaps by praying in tongues, or singing in the Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:15).

Power for living!

The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is God’s wonderful gift to us, purchased by Christ at Calvary, distributed by him to all those who ask him, and an indispensable aid to our discipleship, ministry, witness and prayer life. In the words of Paul in Ephesians 5:18, *‘Be continuously filled with the Spirit’*.

As you read these words now perhaps you have really asked for the baptism in the Holy Spirit and feel that you have not yet received. Remember the words of Jesus again – *‘ask and keep on asking; knock and keep on knocking; seek and keep on seeking’*. Take every opportunity through your small group or church to receive prayer to be filled with the Spirit and maybe share with a trusted friend you know who is living by the Spirit in their daily life, asking them to pray for you and with you.

Why not just close your eyes and maybe lift your hands and open them up to receive? Open hands and arms can sometimes be a symbol of our openness to receive a gift. If, after you have prayed these simple words, you sense God’s Spirit moving in your heart and life, just begin to praise him with your voice, speaking whatever sounds or words come immediately to you.

Prayer

'Heavenly Father, I thank you so much for the gift of your Holy Spirit's power. I am hungry and thirsty for that gift right now, and pray, Lord, that according to your Word, you will fill me now with your Holy Spirit. I receive the same Holy Spirit that you gave to your disciples. In the name of Jesus. Holy Spirit, come! Amen!'

For discussion, further study or reflection

- Share with those around you any questions you may have about 'living by the Spirit'.
- Have you received any new anointing of the Spirit since you began this course? Share that with someone else today.
- Read Acts 1:5 again and claim the promise for yourself.
- Read Acts 2:1-4 and thank God for the wonderful gift of his Holy Spirit.

