

A large, stylized flame graphic in a dark red color, centered on the page. The flame has a circular base with a flame-like shape inside, and several pointed tongues of flame extending upwards. The background is a textured, dark red surface.

FAN

INTO

FLAME

21 DAY STUDY GUIDE

THIS GUIDE
BELONGS TO:

THANK YOU FOR PARTNERING WITH US!

We are excited to offer this study guide as a way for people (like you!) to connect with God through the daily reading of Scripture.

Your payment of \$5 helps offset the related costs and enables us to provide this resource to those who may not purchase it on their own. For your convenience, you can pay for your study guide by scanning the QR code below. You can also bring cash or check to the church at 777 Carmichael Road, Hudson, WI.



WELCOME!

One of the most remarkable questions in the New Testament is found in Acts 19:1-2.

"Paul... came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. And he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' And they said, 'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.'"
Acts 19:1-2

Most Christians today would probably not respond in quite the same way. We've certainly heard of the Holy Spirit, yet for many of us, the person and work of the Holy Spirit remain a mystery. We know the Father. We know the Son. But the Spirit can be confusing, and even frightening. We may affirm that he is real, but it's often hard to know what his presence in our lives looks like.

That is unfortunate because the Holy Spirit is not a minor character in the story of Scripture. He was present at creation. He empowers God's people for all kinds of incredible things. He speaks through the prophets. He anoints kings and servants to carry his purposes forward. The Spirit raised Jesus from the dead. He gives new life to sinners. He dwells within every believer. And he equips the church to carry out the mission of Christ.

The Spirit is "Christ with us."

During this Spiritual Journey, we're going to slow down and spend time getting to know the Holy Spirit and seek to understand what his presence in our lives will mean for us, the people around us, and the church.

This guide is a little different from our normal Daily Reading Guides. Rather than following a daily reading plan, you'll work through eleven study sessions at your own pace. We've broken them down into:

- **Week One – Sessions 1-4**
- **Week Two – Sessions 5-7**
- **Week Three – Sessions 8-11**

If you don't want to do the 11th Session on your own, it will be taught by Pastor Jan at our LEAD FCC conference coming up on August 15th.

The reason that we've broken these up into "Sessions" rather than daily readings is because a few of the sessions may take as long as an hour to finish. Our Daily Reading Guides are built for 20-30 minute segments. It may take you a couple of days to finish one session. Plan accordingly.

In Week One (Sessions 1-4), we will meet the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament and discover that the Spirit is:

- **The Creating and Sustaining Spirit**
- **The Spirit of Power and Humility**
- **The Spirit of Prophecy**
- **The Anointing Spirit**
- **The Coming Spirit**

In Week Two (Sessions 5-7), we'll look at one story in the Book of Acts to reflect on the impact of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives, the lives of the people around us, and in the church.

In Week Three (Sessions 8-11), we'll consider what the presence of the Holy Spirit might mean in all of the places we live, work, play and learn.

We'll also take a Spiritual Gifts Survey to just get the conversation started about how God may have gifted us and do some reflecting on how to develop those gifts for his glory and our joy.

My prayer is that this study will do more than increase your knowledge. I pray that it will deepen your love for God, increase your awareness of the Spirit's presence in your life, and prepare you to respond to his call. As we move through our "Fan Into Flame" series, we'll discover that the Holy Spirit has not only given every believer new life in Christ, but also equipped us for meaningful service in Christ's mission.

May the Lord use this journey to help us know his Spirit more fully, trust him more deeply, and follow Jesus more faithfully.

Grace and Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Prince".

Tim Prince
Lead Teaching Pastor for Faith Community Church



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SOME BACKGROUND FOR WEEK 1

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for “spirit” is *ruakh* (רוּחַ), and it has a profound triple meaning:

- spirit (inner life)
- wind (an unseen powerful force)
- breath (the very essence of life)

All three of these things: spirit, wind and breath are unseen, but powerful and life-giving. Keep an eye out for these kinds of words as you read. In the Old Testament, the ideas of spirit, wind, and breath are closely connected and often signal the work of God's Spirit, even when the Spirit is not explicitly mentioned.

For a great overview of the Holy Spirit in scripture, this four-minute video from The Bible Project is well worth the time:



You're going to notice that most of the quotations and materials in Session One, are taken from a little book called "Knowing the Holy Spirit Through the Old Testament" by Christopher J. H. Wright. It's an excellent (and short!) book that I'd recommend if you want to take a deeper dive.

Here are a two other resources:

1. *Holy Spirit Power* by Charles Spurgeon
2. *Baptism and Fullness* by John Stott





WEEK 1

SESSIONS 1-4

SESSION 1

THE SPIRIT CREATES AND SUSTAINS LIFE

PRAY

Father, help me to know your Holy Spirit more as I read and study today. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

Read the following scriptures with a pen in hand. Circle, underline or mark any words, phrases or ideas that stand out to you, especially as they relate to the Holy Spirit.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

Genesis 1:1-2

*O LORD, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom have you made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.
Here is the sea, great and wide,
which teems with creatures innumerable,
living things both small and great.
There go the ships,
and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it.
These all look to you,
to give them their food in due season.
When you give it to them, they gather it up;
when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.*

*When you hide your face, they are dismayed;
when you take away their breath, they die
and return to their dust.
When you send forth your Spirit, they are created,
and you renew the face of the ground.*

Psalm 104:24-30

*If [God] should set his heart to it
and gather to himself his spirit and his breath,
all flesh would perish together,
and man would return to dust.*

Job 34:14-15

*The Spirit of God has made me,
and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.*

Job 33:4

*Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one
is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

*Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when
he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's
womb and be born?"*

*Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is
born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the
kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh,
and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not
marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'"*

John 3:3-7

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

Romans 8:9-11

STUDY AND RESPOND

The Spirit of God is Creative. He was there at creation, hovering over chaos and darkness, poised for action. There was potential, but it hadn't been brought into order and given life. God spoke; his Word created; the Spirit brought it all to life. The Spirit of God gives and sustains life. He brings order and abundance out of chaos and darkness.

"There is a close link throughout the Bible between the Spirit and the word of God. It is closest when the word ruakh is used alongside the word neshama, which also means breath. Either or both together can speak of the powerful, creating, breathing word of God."¹

The Spirit of God is also a Sustainer. He not only gives life, but he sustains it. Every day you wake up and the world is still here! It is continuously sustained, restored and rejuvenated. From plants, to animals to humans, all things are sustained by the Spirit of God.

The Holy Spirit is also the Spirit of resurrection and of the New Creation (2 Cor. 5:17). He is the Spirit who raised Christ from the dead, and one day he will raise our bodies from the dead as well (Rom. 8:11). In the meantime, we must be "born again" by this same Spirit.

Through the miracle of regeneration, the Holy Spirit gives new spiritual life to those who are dead in sin. In doing so, he unites us to Christ, enables us to share in all the benefits of Christ's saving work, and begins the lifelong process of transforming us into the likeness of Jesus.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What did you learn about the Holy Spirit that surprised, encouraged, challenged or amazed you today?

2. Romans 8 says that the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead now dwells in every believer. Do you believe this? Can you say confidently that you have been "born again" in this way? What questions do you have about it?

3. Is there any place in your life that is characterized by chaos, darkness or exhaustion? Bring that to the Spirit in prayer right now.

"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" Paul asked the new believers at Ephesus (Acts 19:2). They had not even heard of him. We certainly have, so a more appropriate question for us might be, "Are you aware of what you have received when you received the Holy Spirit?"

The Holy Spirit, who lives in you if you are a child of God through faith in his Son Jesus Christ, is the Spirit of God who hovered over the very beginning of God's creation as it was spoken into existence. The universe itself owes its being to the Spirit of God.

The Holy Spirit is the one who has been constantly sustaining and renewing the creation ever since, so that the sun rose this morning for another new day and there was breakfast at your table.

The Holy Spirit is the one who gives life to every mortal creature that breathes on this planet, and who is the energy behind every breath you take in this life. And he is the one who gives life eternal to your mortal self, if you have put your faith in the crucified and risen Christ. The Holy Spirit is the midwife of God's new creation, in which you will live in a resurrection body as part of God's new, redeemed humanity, and in which you will serve him and his creation as you were intended to.

This is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the God of the Bible. Do you know him?" ²

"I know a village that was once, perhaps, the most profane in England. It was a village inundated by drunkenness and debauchery of the worst kind. It was nearly impossible for an honest traveler to stop in the local inn without being annoyed by blasphemy. It was a place known for radicals and robbers.



One man, the ringleader of all, listened to the voice of God. The man's heart was broken. The whole gang came to hear the gospel preached, and they sat and seemed to revere the preacher as if he were a god and not a man. These men were changed and reformed. Everyone who knew the place affirmed that such a change could only be brought about by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let the gospel be preached and the Spirit poured out. You will see that it has such power to change the conscience, to improve the conduct, to raise the depraved, and to chastise and curb the wickedness of the race, that you must glory in it. There is nothing like the power of the Spirit. Only let it come, and indeed, everything can be accomplished."³

³ "Holy Spirit Power" C.H. Spurgeon p.39-40

SESSION 2

THE SPIRIT OF POWER AND HUMILITY

PRAY

Father, help me to know your Holy Spirit more as I read and study today. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING: THE SPIRIT OF POWER

Read the following scriptures with a pen in hand. Circle, underline or mark any words, phrases or ideas that stand out to you, especially as they relate to the Holy Spirit.

Then Moses said to the people of Israel, "See, the LORD has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold and silver and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, for work in every skilled craft. And he has inspired him to teach, both him and Oholiab the son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan. He has filled them with skill to do every sort of work done by an engraver or by a designer or by an embroiderer in blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, or by a weaver—by any sort of workman or skilled designer.

Exodus 35:30-35⁴

But when the people of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel, who saved them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. The Spirit of the LORD was upon him, and he judged Israel [...] So the land had rest for forty years [...]

Judges 3:9-11

⁴ You may never have heard of these men – Bezalel and Oholiab, but they are significant because they are the very first people in the Bible to be described as "filled with the Spirit of God"! And notice what they are empowered to do: an artist and an engineer filled with power to build the tabernacle with great skill. Very cool.

And the woman bore a son and called his name Samson. And the young man grew, and the LORD blessed him. And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him [...]

Judges 13:24-25

Then the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon [Samson], and although he had nothing in his hand, he tore the lion in pieces as one tears a young goat [...]

And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon [Samson], and he went down to Ashkelon and struck down thirty men of the town and took their spoil and gave the garments to those who had told the riddle. In hot anger he went back to his father's house.

Judges 14:6, 19

Then the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon [Samson], and the ropes that were on his arms became as flax that has caught fire, and his bonds melted off his hands. And he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, and put out his hand and took it, and with it he struck 1,000 men.

Judges 15:14-15

Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on [Saul's] head and kissed him and said, "Has not the LORD anointed you to be prince over his people Israel? And you shall reign over the people of the LORD and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies. And this shall be the sign to you that the LORD has anointed you to be prince over his heritage...you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place [...]"

Then the Spirit of the LORD will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man.

When he turned his back to leave Samuel, God gave him another heart. And all these signs came to pass that day. When they came to Gibeah, behold, a group of prophets met him, and the Spirit of God rushed upon [Saul], and he prophesied among them. And when all who knew him previously saw how he prophesied with the prophets, the people said to one another, "What has come over the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?"

1 Samuel 10:1, 5-6, 9-11

Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed [David] in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward [...] Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul [...]

1 Samuel 16:13-14

STUDY AND RESPOND

Clearly, the Spirit of God is a Spirit of power. He enables people to do things that they would ordinarily not be able to do on their own. There's also something mysterious about the manifestation of the Spirit under the old covenant (Old Testament). While he clearly gave people extraordinary ability, competence, and skill, the results could be surprising, and at times, morally ambiguous. The Spirit often worked through people who remained deeply flawed and spiritually immature. Under the old covenant, the Spirit empowered individuals for specific tasks and offices. This was not identical to the Spirit's saving work. A person could receive remarkable gifts, abilities, or authority from God while still remaining spiritually separated from God. Consequently, the Holy Spirit could be withdrawn when individuals persistently rejected God's purposes and proved faithless in their calling.

Under the new covenant, the Holy Spirit is not merely given for particular tasks or offices. He is given to all who belong to Christ. The Holy Spirit is said to be the "seal" of our salvation and the "guarantee" of our inheritance (Eph. 1:13-14). His presence in our lives is evidence that we belong to God through faith and through the Spirit, we begin to experience the life that will one day be ours in full.

"There is something of a caution here for us. The power of the Spirit of God can be tied up with the very ambiguous powers of men. Not all so-called manifestations of the Spirit are in and of themselves welcome signs of the wholesome activity of God. They can be mixed up with the unwelcome manifestations of self-serving human ambition. And sometimes they can be deployed in ways that are out of control and potentially devastating." ⁵

Let's contrast this with another man who was filled with the Spirit – Moses.

SCRIPTURE READING: THE SPIRIT OF POWER

As you read, look for the following:

- Power with no sense of self-sufficiency
- Power without jealousy
- Power without selfish ambition

Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, "Oh that we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at."

Moses heard the people weeping throughout their clans, everyone at the door of his tent. And the anger of the LORD blazed hotly, and Moses was displeased.

Moses said to the LORD, "Why have you dealt ill with your servant? And why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of all this people on me? Did I conceive all this people? Did I give them birth, that you should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries a nursing child,' to the land that you swore to give their fathers? Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they weep before me and say, 'Give us meat, that we may eat.' I am not able to carry all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me. If you will treat me like this, kill me at once, if I find favor in your sight, that I may not see my wretchedness."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Gather for me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them, and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you. And I will come down and talk with you there. And I will take some of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you may not bear it yourself alone.

So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD. And he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tent. Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. And as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied. But they did not continue doing it.

Now two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the Spirit rested on them. They were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. And a young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp."

And Joshua the son of Nun, the assistant of Moses from his youth, said, "My lord Moses, stop them." But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!"

Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth.

Numbers 11:4-6, 10-17, 24-29; 12:3

STUDY AND RESPOND

1. As you compare Samson, Saul, David, and Moses, what kind of character qualities do you need grace to grow in right now?

2. If "fanning into flame the gift of God that is in you" means humiliation, total dependence on God, and the end of selfish ambitions, do you want that? What kind of tension does this create in your heart? Do you want that kind of power?

"The paradox of the power of Moses, then, is this. The greatest evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit in his life was precisely the absence of those things that are commonly linked with great and powerful people: pride in one's own self-sufficiency, jealous defense of one's own prerogatives, driving ambition for one's own legacy. This is the power of the Holy Spirit in a human life. This is power with humility.

The church needs leaders. And leaders need power, if they are ever to get anything done... (or, more properly, if God is ever to get anything done through them). But the kind of power they need is not the kind of power by which the world generally assesses leadership – “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the LORD (Zechariah 4:6).

Pray for those whom God has called into positions of leadership among his people, including yourself if appropriate, that there will be much greater evidence of the empowering Spirit of God, and much less evidence of the ambiguous and dangerous power of our fallen human weakness. May we be filled with the power of God’s Spirit, in the likeness of Moses, and of Jesus.”⁶

SESSION 3

THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

PRAY

Father, help me to know your Holy Spirit more as I read and think today. Amen.

[...] no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:21

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness [...]

2 Timothy 3:16

SCRIPTURE READING: FALSE PROPHECY

Read the following scriptures with a pen in hand. Circle, underline or mark any words, phrases or ideas that stand out to you. Make a note of the characteristics of false prophets.

*In the prophets of Samaria
I saw an unsavory thing:
they prophesied by Baal
and led my people Israel astray.
But in the prophets of Jerusalem
I have seen a horrible thing:
they commit adultery and walk in lies;
they strengthen the hands of evildoers,
so that no one turns from his evil;
all of them have become like Sodom to me,
and its inhabitants like Gomorrah.*

Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets:

"Behold, I will feed them with bitter food
and give them poisoned water to drink,
for from the prophets of Jerusalem
ungodliness has gone out into all the land."

Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Do not listen to the words
of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain
hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from
the mouth of the LORD. They say continually to those
who despise the word of the LORD, 'It shall be well with
you'; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own
heart, they say, 'No disaster shall come upon you.'"
For who among them has stood in the council of
the LORD

to see and to hear his word,
or who has paid attention to his word and listened?
Behold, the storm of the LORD!

Wrath has gone forth,
a whirling tempest;
it will burst upon the head of the wicked.
The anger of the LORD will not turn back
until he has executed and accomplished
the intents of his heart.

In the latter days you will understand it clearly.

"I did not send the prophets,
yet they ran;

I did not speak to them,
yet they prophesied.

But if they had stood in my council,
then they would have proclaimed my words to my
people,
and they would have turned them from their evil way,
and from the evil of their deeds.

Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a
hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? Therefore,
behold, I am against the prophets, declares the LORD,
who steal my words from one another.

Behold, I am against the prophets, declares the LORD, who use their tongues and declare, 'declares the LORD.' Behold, I am against those who prophesy lying dreams, declares the LORD, and who tell them and lead my people astray by their lies and their recklessness, when I did not send them or charge them. So they do not profit this people at all, declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 23:13-22,29-32

The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel, who are prophesying, and say to those who prophesy from their own hearts: 'Hear the word of the LORD!' Thus says the LORD God, Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! Your prophets have been like jackals among ruins, O Israel. You have not gone up into the breaches, or built up a wall for the house of Israel, that it might stand in battle in the day of the LORD. They have seen false visions and lying divinations. They say, 'Declares the LORD,' when the LORD has not sent them, and yet they expect him to fulfill their word. Have you not seen a false vision and uttered a lying divination, whenever you have said, 'Declares the LORD,' although I have not spoken?"

Therefore thus says the LORD God: "Because you have uttered falsehood and seen lying visions, therefore behold, I am against you, declares the LORD God. My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and who give lying divinations. They shall not be in the council of my people, nor be enrolled in the register of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD God. Precisely because they have misled my people, saying, 'Peace,' when there is no peace..."

Ezekiel 13:1-10

Did you see:

- Lack of personal moral integrity?
- Lack of public moral courage?
- Lack of a prophetic mandate from God?

SCRIPTURE READING: THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

Clearly, a claim to speak for God, even if it is accompanied by an impressive spiritual resume, or even signs and wonders is not proof that a person has spoken by the Holy Spirit. Now let's look at the characteristics of true prophets - Read the following scriptures with a pen in hand. Circle, underline or mark any words, phrases or ideas that stand out to you.

And the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but speak only the word that I tell you." So Balaam went on with the princes of Balak. When Balak heard that Balaam had come, he went out to meet him at the city of Moab, on the border formed by the Arnon, at the extremity of the border. And Balak said to Balaam, "Did I not send to you to call you? Why did you not come to me? Am I not able to honor you?" Balaam said to Balak, "Behold, I have come to you! Have I now any power of my own to speak anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that must I speak."

And the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth and said, "Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak."

[Balaam blesses Israel three times in the verses that follow.]

And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he struck his hands together. And Balak said to Balaam, "I called you to curse my enemies, and behold, you have blessed them these three times. Therefore now flee to your own place. I said, 'I will certainly honor you,' but the LORD has held you back from honor."

And Balaam said to Balak, "Did I not tell your messengers whom you sent to me, 'If Balak should give me his house full of silver and gold, I would not be able to go beyond the word of the LORD, to do either good or bad of my own will. What the LORD speaks, that will I speak'?"

Numbers 22:35-38; 23:5; 24:10-13⁷

Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said to them, "Shall I go to battle against Ramoth-gilead, or shall I refrain?" And they said, "Go up, for the LORD will give it into the hand of the king." But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not here another prophet of the LORD of whom we may inquire?" And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD, Micaiah the son of Imlah, but I hate him, for he never prophesies good concerning me, but evil."

And the messenger who went to summon Micaiah said to him, "Behold, the words of the prophets with one accord are favorable to the king. Let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak favorably."¹⁴ But Micaiah said, "As the LORD lives, what the LORD says to me, that I will speak."

And he said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the LORD said, 'These have no master; let each return to his home in peace.'" And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?"

⁷ What's fascinating about the story of Balaam is that he wasn't an Israelite. He was a pagan prophet, yet we read that "the Spirit of God came upon him" (Num. 24:2) and he blessed Israel. Because the Spirit was upon him, he could only speak the truth. He would later do great evil (Num. 31:16; 2 Peter 2:15-16).

And the king of Israel said, "Seize Micaiah, and take him back to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son, and say, 'Thus says the king, "Put this fellow in prison and feed him meager rations of bread and water, until I come in peace."' " And Micaiah said, "If you return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me."

1 Kings 22:6-8,13-14,17-18,26-28

*Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets
who lead my people astray,
who cry "Peace"
when they have something to eat,
but declare war against him
who puts nothing into their mouths.
Therefore it shall be night to you, without vision,
and darkness to you, without divination.
The sun shall go down on the prophets,
and the day shall be black over them;
the seers shall be disgraced,
and the diviners put to shame;
they shall all cover their lips,
for there is no answer from God.
But as for me, I am filled with power,
with the Spirit of the Lord,
and with justice and might,
to declare to Jacob his transgression
and to Israel his sin.
Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob
and rulers of the house of Israel,
who detest justice
and make crooked all that is straight,
who build Zion with blood
and Jerusalem with iniquity.
Its heads give judgment for a bribe;
its priests teach for a price;
its prophets practice divination for money;*

*yet they lean on the Lord and say,
"Is not the Lord in the midst of us?
No disaster shall come upon us."
Therefore because of you
Zion shall be plowed as a field;
Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins,
and the mountain of the house a wooded height.*
Micah 3:5-12

STUDY AND RESPOND

Did you see:

- A compulsion to speak the truth?
- The courage to stand for justice?
- A readiness to suffer for obedience?

When Christians talk about the power of the Holy Spirit, we often focus on extraordinary gifts, dramatic experiences, and supernatural manifestations. Yet the prophets remind us that one of the clearest evidences of the Spirit's presence is a courageous commitment to the truth. The Spirit-filled prophets spoke God's Word faithfully, called people to repentance, defended the cause of the vulnerable, and endured rejection for their obedience.

This helps us understand Revelation 19:10: "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." All true prophecy ultimately bears witness to Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. He does not flatter, deceive, or accommodate himself to our desires. He glorifies Christ, exposes sin, calls people to repentance, and points us toward God's righteousness and justice.

For that reason, those who are filled with the Holy Spirit should expect more than unusual experiences. They should expect to grow in truthfulness, moral courage, concern for justice, and faithfulness to Christ—even when such faithfulness is costly.

The same Spirit who empowered the prophets now empowers God's people to bear witness to Jesus in their words and in their lives.

1. True prophets loved and spoke the word of God. How might you “fan into flame” your love for God's word this year?

2. If “fanning into flame the gift of God” means growing in truthfulness, courage, and concern for justice, is that the kind of power you want? What if it means facing rejection?

3. Revelation 19:10 says that “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” In your current season of life, what opportunities has God given you to bear witness to Jesus through your words, actions, or relationships? What fears or obstacles might be holding you back?

“As we seek to discern the presence or absence of the Spirit in ministries that claim to be prophetic today, we should listen to those who bring that kind of message, and whose personal and organizational lives embody it. And we should beware of false prophets who have no concern for doing justice, who love only themselves and who walk in arrogant defiance of God, no matter how much they claim the name of his Son or his Spirit.”⁸

SESSION 4

THE ANOINTING SPIRIT

PRAY

Father, help me to know your Holy Spirit more as I read and think today. Amen.

BACKGROUND

The presence of the Holy Spirit is rarely mentioned explicitly in the context of someone being anointed (cf 1 Samuel 16:13). However, anointing a person with oil in the Bible was a tangible symbol of the Holy Spirit's presence. An "anointed one"⁹ was someone chosen and commissioned by God for a particular office - usually a Priest or a King. Such responsibilities could not be met with merely human strength, and so it was understood that success would require the presence of the Holy Spirit.

As we've already seen (Session Two), both Saul and David were anointed as kings over Israel. The anointing was a simple, physical act, but it was followed by an experience of the mysterious power of the Holy Spirit. As we saw with Saul, this anointing did not guarantee his success as a leader or faithfulness to his office. Anointing with oil, needed to be followed by whole-hearted obedience as we saw in the life of David (1 Sam. 13:14).

"Most of the kings of Israel, though physically anointed and fully aware of what it meant, actually failed to do what their anointing symbolized. They were anointed on their head with oil, but they were not obedient in their lives. They failed to fulfill the significance of their anointing."⁹

⁹ In Hebrew, the title "Anointed One" is "Messiah" (מָשִׁיחַ). The Greek word is "Christos" (χριστός). Messiah (Hebrew) = Christos (Greek) = Christ (English) = "The Anointed One". Therefore, "Christ" is not a name, but a title.

SCRIPTURE READING: THE ANNOINTING SPIRIT

Read the following scriptures from the prophet Isaiah with a pen in hand. These were written six centuries before Christ and they describe a coming Servant-King. Circle, underline or mark any words, phrases or ideas that stand out to you.

*There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.
And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.*

Isaiah 11:1-5

*Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my Spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the nations.
He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;
a bruised reed he will not break,
and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice.
He will not grow faint or be discouraged[a]
till he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his law.*

Thus says God, the LORD,
who created the heavens and stretched them out,
who spread out the earth and what comes from it,
who gives breath to the people on it
and spirit to those who walk in it:
"I am the LORD; I have called you [b] in righteousness;
I will take you by the hand and keep you;
I will give you as a covenant for the people,
a light for the nations,
to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.

Isaiah 42:1-7

The Spirit of the LORD God is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
to grant to those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.

Isaiah 61:1-3

Did you see:

- A commitment to justice – The Spirit empowers leaders to establish the law of God.
- A commitment to compassion – The Spirit empowers leaders to love the brokenhearted.
- A commitment to enlightenment – The Spirit empowers leaders to teach the word of God in such a way that the eyes of the spiritually blind are opened.
- A commitment to liberate – The Spirit empowers leaders to bring freedom and hope to those who are broken.

"Mission in the way of Christ, then, is mission that is empowered by the anointing Spirit of God, committed to the justice and compassion of God, characterized by the Servant of God, including even suffering and the way of the cross. Before we pray so glibly (for ourselves or others) for the anointing of the Spirit, perhaps it would be good to remind ourselves what the Bible says it will mean."¹⁰

LOOK AT CHRIST

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Luke 4:16-21

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

John 20:21-22

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. As you read Isaiah 11, 42, and 61, what qualities of the Spirit's anointing stand out to you most?

2. What part of Jesus' mission do you sense God calling you to participate in more fully?

[Excerpts from the private journal of 25-year-old English Parliamentarian William Wilberforce at the time of his conversion; 1785]

"What madness is the course I am pursuing. I believe all the great truths of the Christian religion, but I am not acting as though I did. Should I die in this state I must go into a place of misery. Yet I may become religious. Has not God promised His Holy Spirit on them that ask Him? It was not so much the fear of punishment by which I was affected as a sense of my great sinfulness in having so long neglected the unspeakable mercies of my God and Savior; and such was the effect which this thought produced, that for months I was in a state of the deepest depression, from strong convictions of my guilt. Indeed nothing which I have ever read in the accounts of others exceeded what I felt."¹¹

¹¹ "Amazing Grace" by Eric Metaxas p.53

[Wilberforce meets with an old mentor, John Newton to talk about leaving Parliament if he is to follow Christ.]

*"Wilberforce must have poured his heart out now to the one person who might understand his anguish and his difficult choices. But as so often is the case, Wilberforce discovered that what he had so terribly feared was a chimera, nothing as bad as he had thought. [John Newton] didn't tell him what he had expected – that to follow God he would have to leave politics. On the contrary, Newton encouraged Wilberforce to stay where he was, saying that God could use him there."*¹²

[House of Commons; 1807]

*"The House of Commons rose to its feet, turned to Wilberforce, and began to cheer. They gave three rousing hurrahs while Wilberforce sat with his head bowed and wept." Then the Commons voted to abolish the slave trade by a vote of 283 to 16. Prime Minister Granville called the passage, "A measure which will diffuse happiness among millions now in existence, and for which his memory will be blessed by millions yet unborn."*¹³



WEEK 2

SESSIONS 5-7

SESSION 5

THE COMING SPIRIT

PRAY

Father, help me to know your Holy Spirit more as I read and think today. Amen.

So far in our study, we have seen that the Holy Spirit is:

- The Creating and Sustaining Spirit – He gives life and brings order out of chaos.
- The Spirit of Power and Humility – He empowers people to do things they could not do on their own.
- The Spirit of Prophecy – He empowers us to speak the truth and endure suffering if need be.
- The Anointing Spirit – He sets people apart for particular roles in his mission.

Yet throughout the Old Testament there remains a sense of anticipation. The Spirit creates, empowers, speaks, and anoints—but his presence is often limited to particular people for particular purposes. Kings are anointed. Prophets are filled. Craftsmen are empowered. Leaders receive strength for specific tasks. But Moses longed for more: "Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!" (Num. 11:29)

Could there come a day when the Spirit of God would not rest on a few, but on all of God's people? Could there come a day when ordinary men and women would know God personally and be empowered for his mission?

SCRIPTURE READING

Read the following scriptures with a pen in hand. As you read, look for the promises God makes about the coming of his Spirit. What will be different when the Spirit comes? Who will receive him? What will he accomplish in the lives of God's people?

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules

Ezekiel 36:25-27

*“And it shall come to pass afterward,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.*

*Even on the male and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit.*

“And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.

Joel 2:28-32

And [John the Baptist] preached, saying, “After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

Mark 1:7-11

Jesus answered [Nicodemus], "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'"

John 3:3-7

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit [...]

But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

*"And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;
even on my male servants and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall
prophesy.*

*And I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;
the sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the day of the Lord comes, the great and
magnificent day.*

*And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon
the name of the Lord shall be saved.' [...]*

*Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart,
and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles,
"Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to
them, "Repent and be baptized 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. For the promise
is for you and for your children and for all who are far off,
everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."*

Acts 2:1-4,14-21,37-39

STUDY AND RESPOND

Did you notice what happened? The Spirit who once rested on judges, kings, and prophets has now been poured out on the whole church. "You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The promise Moses longed for has arrived. The promise Ezekiel announced has arrived.

The promise Joel foretold has arrived. Through the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, ordinary men and women now receive the Holy Spirit.

Every believer is born again by the Spirit, indwelt by the Spirit, empowered by the Spirit, and gifted by the Spirit.

This is one of the greatest privileges of the Christian life. The Spirit who hovered over the waters of creation, empowered Moses, inspired the prophets, and anointed Jesus now lives in every one of God's people.

So - "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2). If you belong to Christ, the answer is "Yes." Now, the question is, "Are you yielding yourself to his work? What might happen if the Spirit's gifts, power, truth, and mission were fully welcomed in your life? What might happen if you truly began to "fan into flame the gift of God" that is in you?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What have you learned about the Holy Spirit that you love or appreciate most?

2. Are you able to see the connection between the Spirit's work in the Old Testament and the New? What kinds of questions do you have right now?

3. What might happen if the Spirit's gifts, power, truth, and mission were fully welcomed in your life? What might happen if you truly began to "fan into flame the gift of God" that is in you?



SESSION 6

THE SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH

PRAY

Father, as I read and think today, help me to know and love the work of your Spirit in the church today. Amen.

So far in our study, we have seen that the Holy Spirit is:

- The Creating, Sustaining, Life-Giving Spirit (Session One) – He gives life and brings order out of chaos.
- The Spirit of Power and Humility (Session Two) – He empowers people to do things they could not do on their own.
- The Spirit of Prophecy (Session Three) – He empowers us to speak the truth, stand for justice, and endure suffering if need be.
- The Anointing Spirit (Session Four) – He sets people apart for particular roles in his mission.
- The Coming Spirit (Session Five) – The prophets promised that a day was coming when the Spirit would be poured out on all who know God personally, not just a select few.

If you want to see the Creating, Empowering, Speaking and Anointing Spirit of God in action, there is no better place to go than to the Book of Acts. His work is evident on every page. In sessions six and seven we're going to look at just one story as an example – Acts chapters three and four.

SCRIPTURE READING

As you read this story, have a pen in hand and make a note of anything that you think is interesting or that stands out to you, but be sure to make a note of any time you see the Spirit's Creative, Empowering, Speaking or Anointing presence expressed.

Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God, and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

Peter Speaks in Solomon's Portico

While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's. And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.' And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."

Peter and John Before the Council

And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?"

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, saying, "What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name." So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened. For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.

The Believers Pray for Boldness

When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,

*"Why did the Gentiles rage,
and the peoples plot in vain?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers were gathered together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed"—*

for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

They Had Everything in Common

Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Acts 3-4

Did you see:

- The Creating, Sustaining, Life-Giving presence of the Spirit
- The Spirit of Power and Humility
- The Spirit of Prophecy
- The Anointing Spirit

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What stood out to you most about the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in this story? Is it what you expected? Why or why not?

2. What do you love most about what you just read? Why?

3. If you could ask God for one thing today in response to what you just read what would it be?

SESSION 7

THE SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH (CONT.)

PRAY

Father, as I read and think today, help me to know and love the work of your Spirit in the church today. Amen.

STUDY AND REFLECT

Take a minute to briefly review Acts chapters 3-4 (p.44), and your responses to the reading. Is there anything you would add or update today?

In this session, we're going to consider the impact of the Holy Spirit's presence on the apostles, the city of Jerusalem and it's people, and the church.

Before we do that, consider the following summary of the purpose of the Book of Acts from Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart in their excellent book, "How to Read the Bible for All its Worth".

*"Nonetheless, we believe that much of Acts is intended by Luke to serve as a model. But the model is not so much in the specifics as in the overall picture. By the very way God has moved him to structure and narrate this story it seems probably that we are to view this triumphant, joyful, forward-moving expansion of the gospel into the Gentile world, empowered by the Holy Spirit and resulting in changed lives and local communities, as God's intent for the church, nothing can hinder it, neither Sanhedrin nor synagogue, dissension nor narrow-mindedness, prison, nor plot. Luke, therefore, probably intended that the ongoing church should be "like them," but in the larger sense, not by modeling itself on any specific example."*¹⁴

"[...] The recurring motif that nothing can hinder this forward movement of the church empowered by the Holy Spirit makes us think that Luke also intended his readers to see this as a model for their existence. And the fact that Acts is in the canon further makes us think that surely this is the way the church was always intended to be – evangelistic, joyful, empowered by the Holy Spirit." ¹⁵

Notice what Gordon and Fee do not emphasize. They do not focus on unusual experiences, miraculous gifts, or specific manifestations. Instead, they focus on the Spirit creating a joyful, courageous, gospel-advancing people. To what degree do you agree or disagree with this assessment in light of what you just read?

Does this convict, challenge, comfort, excite or intimidate you?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How did the presence of the Holy Spirit impact Peter and John in this story?

2. How did their ministry impact the city of Jerusalem and its people?

3. How did the presence of the Holy Spirit impact the church in Jerusalem? What kind of community is the Spirit creating in this reading?

4. Which of these three impacts would you most like to see in your own life right now? Why?

- Greater courage and faithfulness in speaking about Jesus like Peter and John?
- Greater gospel impact and transformation in the places you live, work, play?
- Greater unity, generosity, and love in the church?





I WILL REMOVE THE HEART OF
STONE FROM YOUR FLESH AND
GIVE YOU A HEART OF FLESH.

AND I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT
WITHIN YOU, AND CAUSE YOU
TO WALK IN MY STATUTES AND
BE CAREFUL TO OBEY MY RULES

EZEKIEL 36:26-27



The background is a solid mustard yellow color. Overlaid on this are large, stylized flame shapes in a slightly darker shade of yellow. In the top right and bottom left corners, there are decorative elements consisting of three concentric circles in a dark blue color.

WEEK 3

SESSIONS 8-11

SESSION 8

THE SPIRIT WHERE WE LIVE, WORK, PLAY AND LEARN

PRAY

Father, as I read and think today, help me to know and love the work of your Spirit in the church today. Amen.

STUDY AND REFLECT

Take a minute to briefly review Acts chapters 3-4 (p. 44), and the quote from Gordon and Fee (p. 49). Are there any additional thoughts or reflections that you would update today?

In this session, we're going to consider the impact of the Holy Spirit's presence in all of the places we live (our neighborhoods), work, play and learn.

As we reflect on Acts 3-4, it is worth noticing where this story takes place. The Spirit is certainly at work in the church, but the action doesn't begin in a church gathering. It begins on a city street outside the temple. It begins among ordinary people going about their day. In this story, the Spirit empowers Peter and John as they move through the routines of everyday life (going up to the temple to pray was an "ordinary routine" for Peter and John).

This should challenge the way many of us think about the work of the Holy Spirit. When we hear about the Spirit's power, our minds might naturally imagine worship services, conferences, missionaries, pastors, or dramatic spiritual experiences. Yet in Acts, the Spirit repeatedly works through ordinary believers in ordinary places. The Spirit sends God's people into the world as witnesses to Christ in homes, neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, friendship, community organizations... Into every place we live, work, play, and learn.

Before we ask what gifts God may have given us for service, let's first ask:

- Where has God already placed me?
- Who are the people God has put around me?
- What needs do I see there?
- What opportunities for love, service, encouragement, justice, truth, and witness already exist there?
- How might the Holy Spirit desire to make the presence of Christ visible through me in those places?

Today, we're going to spend time praying and writing about those questions.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

First, as you consider how the presence of the Holy Spirit impacted the lives of Peter and John, ask yourself honestly:

1. Do I want that for myself? Why or why not?

2. What fears, distractions, comforts, or ambitions might make me resistant to that?

3. What should I ask God to do in my heart right now?

As you consider how their ministry impacted the city of Jerusalem, take some time to prayerfully consider all the places you live, work, play and learn.

WHERE I LIVE

Think about your neighborhood, apartment building, street, dorm or household.

a. Who has God placed near me?

b. What needs, burdens, or signs of brokenness do I see there?

c. Where do I already see openness, friendship, beauty or grace?

d. What is one simple prayer I can begin praying for this place?

WHERE I WORK

Think about your workplace, daily responsibilities, co-workers, clients, customers, or professional relationships.

a. Who has God placed around me?

b. What pressures, anxieties, injustices, or needs do I notice there?

c. Where might the Spirit be inviting me to display the character of Christ?

d. What would faithfulness look like in this place?

e. What is one simple prayer I can begin praying for this place?

WHERE I PLAY

Think about the places you spend time socially: sports, hobbies, coffee shops, gyms, clubs, teams, online communities, restaurants, parks, or regular rhythms of recreation.

a. Who do I naturally spend time with?

b. What opportunities already exist for friendship, encouragement, hospitality, or witness?

c. How might I become more attentive to the people God has placed there?

d. What is one simple prayer I can begin praying for this place?

WHERE I LEARN

Think about schools, classes, gyms, training environments or any setting where you are being formed.

a. Who is God using to shape me?

b. Who might God be asking me to encourage or strengthen?

c. What am I learning that God may want to use for the good of others?

d. What is one simple prayer I can begin praying for this place?

START SMALL

Look back over what you wrote.

1. Where do you sense the greatest burden?
2. Where do you sense the clearest opportunity?
3. Where do you feel the most resistance?
4. Where might the Holy Spirit be asking you to pay closer attention?

Write one sentence of prayer: “Holy Spirit, make the presence of Christ visible through me in _____ by helping me to _____.”

In our next session, we'll look at how the presence of the Holy Spirit impacts the church.

“Now then, the second point is the inward and spiritual power of the Holy Spirit... the Holy Spirit has a power over men's hearts, which can be very hard to affect. If you want to get them for any worldly object, you can do it. A cheating world can win a man's heart, and a little gold can win a man's heart. A trump of fame and a little clamor of applause can win a man's heart. Still, there is not a minister breathing who can win a man's heart by himself. He can win his ears and make them listen, and he can win his eyes and fix them upon him. He can win his attention, but the heart is very slippery. The heart is a fish that all gospel fishermen have trouble holding... the gospel alone has power over a man's heart.” 16

SESSION 9

THE SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH

PRAY

Father, as I read and think today, help me to know and love the work of your Spirit in the church today. Amen.

STUDY AND REFLECT

Take a minute to briefly review Acts chapters 3-4; especially Acts 4:23-37, and the quote from Gordon and Fee (p. 49). Are there any additional thoughts or reflections that you would update today?

SCRIPTURE READING

As we prepare to think about spiritual gifts, it is important that we first understand why God gives them. Many Christians approach the subject of spiritual gifts by asking, "What is my gift?" The New Testament begins with "What is the church and what is God's vision for it?" The Holy Spirit isn't merely creating gifted individuals, he is creating a unified, mature, Christlike people. Spiritual gifts are one of the tools Christ uses to build his church.

As you read the following passages, pay attention not only to what God gives, but to what God is trying to build.

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude.

It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says,

"When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men."

(In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth?

He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Ephesians 4:1-16

Did you see?

- Love is more important than giftedness.
- Unity is more important than individuality.
- Gifts are given by Christ, not chosen by us.
- Every believer has a role to play.
- Leaders equip; they do not perform all the ministry.
- Spiritual maturity is the goal.
- The church grows when every member does their part.
- Everything is intended to build up the body of Christ.

STUDY AND REFLECT

The picture that emerges from Acts 4, 1 Corinthians 13, Ephesians 4 and a host of other scriptures is remarkably consistent. The Holy Spirit creates a people who love one another deeply, remain united around Christ, speak the truth in love, serve one another faithfully, and grow together into spiritual maturity. This means that spiritual gifts are never an end in themselves.

They are not given so that we can draw attention to ourselves, build our own platform, or achieve personal fulfillment. They are given so that Christ's presence becomes visible in his church and through his church to the world. Before we ask what gifts we have received, we must first ask whether we desire the kind of church the Spirit is trying to create.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Which descriptions of love in 1 Corinthians 13 do you find most encouraging? Which do you find most challenging?

2. According to Ephesians 4, what is Christ trying to build in his church?

3. What would you most like to see the Holy Spirit strengthen in your own church community?

"It was at a church service in Munich that I saw him, the former S.S. man who had stood guard at the shower room door in the processing center at Ravensbruck. He was the first of our actual jailers that I had seen since that time. And suddenly it was all there – the roomful of mocking men, the heaps of clothing, Betsie's pain-blanced face.

He came up to me as the church was emptying, beaming and bowing. 'How grateful I am for your message Fraulein.' he said. 'To think that, as you say, He has washed my sins away!'

Even as angry, vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more? Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him.

I tried to smile, I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth of charity. And so again I breathed a silent prayer. Jesus I cannot forgive him. Give me Your forgiveness.

As I took his hand the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me.

And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than on our goodness that the world's healing hinges, but on His. When He tells us to love our enemies, He Gives, along with the command, the love itself." ¹⁷

SESSION 10

DISCOVERING YOUR GIFT

PRAY

Father, thank you for not leaving your church unequipped. Help me understand how you have prepared me to serve with your people and participate in your mission. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

In this session, we're going to actually take a spiritual gifts survey to shed some light on the gifts that God has given each of us. Before you do that, a brief reminder of the purpose of spiritual gifts:

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says,

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He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Ephesians 4:1-16

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 4:10-11

Did you see?

- Every believer receives grace for ministry.
- No single person possesses every gift.
- Every gift is needed.
- Gifts are given for the good of others.
- The church suffers when gifts are neglected.
- The church flourishes when every member participates.

A WORD ABOUT SPIRITUAL GIFTS ASSESSMENTS

There are no spiritual gifts assessments in scripture beyond the affirmation of the church. In the Bible, it is the church and its people who call out one another's gifts and recommend one another for service (Acts 13:13; 16:3; 18:24-28). Gifts are usually discovered through service, confirmed by fruit, and affirmed by other believers. With that in mind, a spiritual gifts survey can be a helpful tool to just get the conversation started.

There are also a tremendous number of different spiritual gift assessments out there and none of them even list the same number of kinds of gifts. For example, the gifts assessment that we're going to use lists "evangelism" as a spiritual gift. I'm not really convinced that evangelism is a gift as much as it is something we're all supposed to do that God promises to empower. Other assessments will list "pastor" as a gift, but I'm pretty sure that's just an office or role in the church. Examples of this kind of disagreement abound. Our goal in providing a spiritual gifts assessment is not to stir up controversy, but to just provide a starting place for the conversation.

We are going to use "giftstest.com" because it's free, reasonably short, widely used, pretty solid and can be done online. I am NOT prepared to swear by every "gift" that's listed or by every definition offered. Assessments like this should be done in the context of ministry and friendships with other Christians who can say, "Yeah, I see that in you," or, "I'm not convinced that's a real thing..."

With that in mind, follow this link to do the assessment (it should take about 12 minutes).



giftstest.com/test

Record your highest-scoring gifts below.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Which results surprised you?

2. Which results seem consistent with your experience?

3. Which results raise questions?

4. Where have you already seen God use you in these ways?

5. Have other Christians given you similar feedback?

SESSION 11

FAN INTO FLAME

PRAY

Father, help me to faithfully steward every gift you've entrusted to me for the good of others and the glory of Christ. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

Read the following scriptures with a pen in hand. Circle, underline or mark any words, phrases or ideas that stand out to you, especially as they relate to fanning into flame the gift of God that is in you (2 Timothy 1:6).

I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

2 Timothy 1:3-6

What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

1 Corinthians 3:5-15

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

Did you see?

- Spiritual gifts are meant to be developed. Timothy is commanded to "fan into flame" the gift God had given him.
- God often develops gifts through relationships, encouragement, prayer, and the affirmation of other believers.

- We are servants of Christ and stewards of what belongs to him.
- Different people play different roles, but God gives the growth.
- Faithfulness matters more than recognition, results, or success.
- One day Christ will evaluate how we used what he entrusted to us.
- The goal of every spiritual gift is the glory of Christ and the good of others.

STUDY AND REFLECT

Record your highest-scoring gifts below, and take a minute to look those gifts up in “Definition of Gifts.”

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



giftstest.com/test

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Do you agree with the definitions provided? What questions do you have?

2. Have these gifts been affirmed by others?

3. Who might I ask for honest feedback? Write down three people whose input you trust:

1.

2.

3.

4. How might these gifts be developed? Every gift grows through:

- Prayer
- Practice
- Training
- Feedback
- Experience
- Perseverance

5. What specific steps could help me grow in these gifts?

Gift #1:

Possible Next Step:

Gift #2: _____

Possible Next Step: _____

Gift #3: _____

Possible Next Step: _____

FINAL REFLECTION

What is one specific step of obedience I sense God asking me to take this year?

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy Spirit, thank you for giving gifts to your people. Help me to use what you have entrusted to me with humility, courage, love, and faithfulness so that Christ's presence may be seen in his church and in the world. Amen.



THE SPIRIT...

CREATES LIFE.
EMPOWERS GOD'S PEOPLE.
SPEAKS GOD'S TRUTH.
ANOINTS FOR MISSION.
DWELLS IN EVERY BELIEVER.
BUILDS CHRIST'S CHURCH.
SENDS US INTO THE WORLD.
EQUIPS EVERY BELIEVER FOR SERVICE.
CALLS US TO FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP.

Fan into flame the gift of God that is in you.
2 Timothy 1:6

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

NOTES



Lined area for notes, consisting of 25 horizontal lines.

