

The Christian's Guide



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Luke 2:25-30, John 14:26, John 15:26, 16:12-14, Rom. 8:4, 1 Cor. 12:10.*

Memory Text: “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come” (*John 16:13*).

The death of Jesus for the sins of the world is the most important of all truths. In contrast, what else really matters? And because it is so important, God hasn't left it up to us to try to figure it out on our own. Instead, we have been given the promise of the Holy Spirit, which will guide us in our understanding of this truth. For this reason, in the end, no one will have an excuse in the day of judgment.

Indeed, the Spirit is a gift from God to us as fallen beings. Without the death of Jesus, there would have been no salvation for anyone; at the same time, without the Spirit to guide, regenerate, and empower us, there would be no personal salvation. Jesus and the Spirit are knit into One in order to bring humanity, lost in the wilderness of transgression, back into the presence of the Father. It is the Father's plan to restore, through Jesus and the Spirit, the peace and harmony that reigned between God and humanity before the entrance of sin.

This week we'll look a little more at the crucial operation of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 27.*

The Spirit, a Guide

“The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (*John 14:26*).

As an ambassador speaks in the name of his home government to a foreign government, so the Spirit will speak to men and women in Jesus’ name and with His authority. Jesus has perpetuated His earthly teaching ministry through the Spirit. “The Lord Jesus acts through the Holy Spirit.”—Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 282.

In addition to teaching, what else will the Spirit do? *John 14:26*.

“It was not until after Christ’s ascension to His Father, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the believers, that the disciples fully appreciated the Saviour’s character and mission. After they had received the baptism of the Spirit, they began to realize that they had been in the very presence of the Lord of glory. As the sayings of Christ were brought to their remembrance, their minds were opened to comprehend the prophecies, and to understand the miracles which He had wrought. . . . His lessons, which they had but dimly understood, now came to them as a fresh revelation. The Scriptures became to them a new book.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 507.

What other promises does Jesus give us regarding the Holy Spirit? *John 14:17, John 15:26, 16:12-14*.

The Spirit is a living, personal Teacher. Every time we open the Bible, it is possible to have the Spirit unveil to us the true meaning of what we read. The key to this is daily to surrender ourselves to the Lord, asking Him to open our hearts and minds to truth, whatever it is, wherever it may lead us. In such circumstances the Holy Spirit can surely guide.

Ask yourself how open you are to the teachings of the Holy Spirit. Do you listen to Him, or do you make excuses in order to do your own thing?

Flesh and Spirit

Read Romans 8:4. Write in your own words what you believe Paul is saying. Focus specifically on what walking “after the Spirit” means. *See also Rom. 13:14, Gal. 5:22-24.*

The Christian chooses not to follow his or her own impulses and gratify his or her own inclinations but to follow, instead, the biddings of the Spirit. The dedicated follower of Jesus will never do anything without seeking the advice and guidance of God. “Lord, what do You want me to do?” is the question the Christian continually asks.

Neither is the Christian to dwell in the realm of mere belief or theoretical faith. Our faith will be experimental rather than theoretical. Under the guidance of the Spirit, the heavenly mind-set of belief will be poured into the earthly mold of action and behavior.

Yet, however much the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives is a miracle of faith, it doesn’t just happen automatically. Few of those who have given their hearts to Christ and have been baptized in the Holy Spirit suddenly find themselves living pure, sanctified lives without diligent effort on their own part. Here is where people make a mistake: Not to rely on your own works for salvation, or even not to rely on your strength in the battle against sin, isn’t the same as not having a daily struggle with self and the flesh. The battle is there, and real, and it will require suffering on our part in order to be victorious. The good news, however, is that we have been promised victory through the indwelling Spirit.

Read 1 Peter 4:1, 2. What is the message there for us regarding the battle against the flesh?

Is there some specific sin that you struggle with that causes you a great deal of suffering in the flesh as you seek to overcome in Christ’s name? What practical things can you do, on a daily basis, that could make you more open to the power of the Spirit in order for Him to give you the victory that is yours for the asking?

The Spirit and the Word

“Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17).

The Word of God is here called the sword of the Spirit. It was the Spirit that inspired the written revelation, since “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. 1:21). This is an important point that all Christians must always keep before them. God promises us His Holy Spirit, but we are also given warnings.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:10, 1 Timothy 4:1, and 1 John 3:24–4:1.
What’s the message here for us?

The fact of the matter is, there are lots of various spirits out there teaching all sorts of doctrines. Even in the Christian church, strange beliefs, not to mention strange practices, are promoted by those who claim to have been inspired by the Holy Spirit. Though, in some cases, the deceptions and counterfeits are so obvious it’s amazing anyone can fall for them; in others, the deceptions can be quite subtle, promoted by people who might be kind, loving, gentle, even sincere. How, then, can someone ultimately test the spirits, whether they be of God or not?

What do these texts teach us about the ultimate test of whether or not teachings are inspired by the Holy Spirit? Ps. 119:105, Isa. 8:20, Luke 10:26, 16:29-31, Acts 17:11, 2 Tim. 3:15-17.

John Calvin admonishes: “We ought zealously to apply ourselves both to read and to hearken to Scripture if indeed we want to receive any gain and benefit from the Spirit of God. . . . But lest under his sign the Spirit of Satan should creep in, he would have us recognize him in his own image, which he has stamped upon the Scriptures. He is the Author of the Scriptures: he cannot vary and differ from himself. Hence he must ever remain just as he once revealed himself there.”—John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* I, 9:2 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960).

What kinds of spiritual deceptions have you encountered? How did the Word of God protect you? Be prepared to share your answer with the class.

The Work of the Spirit

Read John 16:14. What does Jesus say the Holy Spirit will do?

The work and purpose of the Spirit are centered on Jesus. He does not call attention to Himself, but He directs the attention to Jesus. The litmus test of any alleged workings of the Spirit in believers or organizations is the place they accord Jesus. If they call attention to and glorify self or humanity, and even magnify humanity's spiritual experience, they lack the insignia of the Spirit.

The Spirit was not to present His own ideas or notions but only what Jesus taught. Jesus said, "He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (*John 16:14*).

Being the Spirit of truth, He will especially bear witness to Jesus, who is the Truth (*see John 14:6*). And it is only through the Spirit's speaking directly to our hearts that we ever come to a true and living knowledge of Jesus Christ and bear fruit for His glory.

What are other ways the Holy Spirit can glorify our Lord? *John 15:8, Gal. 5:22-25, Eph. 5:9.*

As believers, one of the greatest ways to bring glory to God, both before people and angels (*1 Cor. 4:9*), is by the lives we live, the characters we form, and the way we treat others. These actions and attitudes come through the work of the Holy Spirit in us; to the degree that we cooperate, to the degree that we are willing to die to self and to surrender to God's will, to that degree the Lord can work in us "both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (*Phil. 2:13*). How crucial for all who profess the name of Jesus to live daily in an attitude of faith, thanksgiving, and surrender to His Spirit.

Look at your own life in the past 24 hours. What things did you do that brought glory to God? What things brought shame? What changes do you need to make?

An Example of the Spirit's Guidance

Read Luke 2:25-30 and then answer the following questions:

How did Simeon know when to go to the temple in order to find “the Lord’s Christ” (vs. 26)?

What in these texts reveals why Simeon was so open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit? What’s the important message for us in there?

What was the significance of Simeon’s prayer; that is, what was he doing through it? See *John 15:26, 16:14*. Why is this point the key in understanding the work of the Holy Spirit?

Notice, too, the words of Simeon, under the inspiration of the Spirit, to Mary. What gift of the Spirit was being manifest here? See *Rom. 12:6, 1 Cor. 12:10, 13:2*.

Simeon, obviously, enjoyed such an intimate relationship with God that the Spirit told him to go to the temple on the day the child Jesus was being dedicated. From among the several boys who were being dedicated to God that day, he was led to choose Jesus, who, from all outward appearances, surely didn’t look any different from any other baby. Meanwhile, the officiating priest did not recognize Jesus as the promised Messiah; apparently, unlike Simeon, he was not susceptible to the promptings of the Spirit. But Simeon recognized Him because God showed him who was “the Lord’s Christ.” Some of the other boys whom Simeon bypassed might also have been born in Bethlehem as the firstborn child to mothers who were of the tribe of Judah. But only Simeon’s intimate acquaintance and communion with God through the Spirit enabled him to interpret the factual prophetic pieces of information and recognize in Jesus the Promised One of God.

Further Study: Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 703–705; *The Great Controversy*, pp. vii, viii, 467–469, 607–610; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 52–55; *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 357–361.

“Even the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart is to be tested by the Word of God. The Spirit which inspired the Scriptures, always leads to the Scriptures.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 43.

Concerning the statement in John 16:14 that reads “He [the Spirit] shall glorify me,” Ellen G. White says: “In these words Christ declares the crowning work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit glorifies Christ by making Him the object of supreme regard, and the Saviour becomes the delight, the rejoicing, of the human agent in whose heart is wrought this transformation.”—*My Life Today*, p. 49.

Discussion Questions:

- ① As a class, go over your answer to Tuesday’s final question. What are some of the spiritual deceptions people have faced? What things have you learned that could be helpful to others?
- ② Take two people: One has very good theology but is mean, nasty, vindictive, and judgmental; the other, though theologically suspect, is kind, loving, forgiving, and generous. Which one do you think is revealing more of the Holy Spirit in his or her life? Be prepared to defend your answer.
- ③ How should the church respond to someone who, acting rather strange, claims to be moving under the guidance of the Holy Spirit?
- ④ What can you do, as a class, that would bring glory to God? Does it take something fancy, some loud production, in order to do this, or can you, as a group, in a quiet and simple way glorify your Lord? If so, how so?

“Show Me How”

Jere Wallack

“I was confused,” Matt Castner said as we talked. “I felt God’s call to be a minister, but I wondered how God could use *me* in the ministry. But after a week at blind camp, I knew.”

Matt was born blind—both physically and spiritually. “I was deep in sin,” Matt testifies. “Then Jesus got hold of my heart. I wouldn’t be alive today if Jesus hadn’t grabbed me with His love!”

Matt had joined a group of young adults for a week at the National Winter Camp for the Blind in Colorado. For one week they enjoyed skiing, snowmobile riding, snow tubing, basketball, roller skating, and other sports normally reserved for those with sight. The week was filled with laughter and pure joy.

Over dinner one night Matt shared his testimony with me. Then he added, “My greatest desire is to give a public invitation to these campers to give their heart to Jesus.”

I was serving as camp chaplain and invited Matt to do just that on Friday evening. Matt responded with “Hallelujah! God does answer prayer!”

For days Matt prayed about what to say. I prayed; we prayed together. On Friday evening I shared stories, experiences, and Bible texts. Then I invited Matt to stand beside me. I took his hand to guide his steps, and God took his heart to guide Matt’s words. Matt began speaking; powerful words flowed from his heart. Then came his invitation: “Some of you have never given your heart to Jesus. This is the time. Some of you, like me, have given your heart to Jesus, but you’ve dabbled again with sin. Jesus is calling me tonight. I am giving my heart to Him again. Will you join me?”

The silence was broken by the sound of sniffles and shuffling of chairs as one then another camper stood to their feet. Campers stood; staff members stood.

Matt prayed, and I prayed. Until the wee hours of the morning Matt prayed and shared the love of Jesus with individual campers. And that night God confirmed Matt’s call into the ministry.

Later Matt told me, “I was praying, ‘God, this is Your show, don’t let me get in the way! Just move, God. Move on my friends’ hearts.’ God answered my prayer. God used me for His glory! God confirmed His call to me,” Matt said. “I must be a minister.”

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