

A Biblical Study of the

Holy Spirit

...be filled with the Spirit;

Ephesians 5:18b (KJV)

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Galatians 5:25 (NASB)

**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.**

Isaiah 11:2 (ESV)

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About Phil Benedict

I (Phil Benedict) grew up in a godly Christian home and was saved as a young child. I was active in our church youth group in Boise, Idaho, where I met my wife, Linda. We married when we were young and God has blessed our marriage. We have now been married for over fifty-four years (as of January 2021). We have four children, all of whom are actively serving the Lord. We both graduated from Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois, and from Boise State University in Boise, Idaho. I have also taken classes in secondary school administration at the College of Idaho in Caldwell, Idaho, as well as classes in Cherokee heritage from Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, and classes in drug and alcohol counseling at Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma. We have served as “full time” Christian workers for over thirty-five years. We have been members of UIM International (United Indian Missions) for over twenty-five years.

Thanks to My Wife

God has given me an exceptional wife. She is a very talented person and she chose to be a stay-at-home mom and to be a ministry partner with me. She has been a huge blessing in my life. She has been my co-worker and partner throughout life. Without exaggerating, she has spent many hundreds of hours editing, checking for mistakes, making suggestions, printing, and binding this and other study guides that we have put together. Without her, these study guides would not exist.

My Prayer

It is my prayer and my desire that the Lord Jesus Christ will be honored and glorified through this Bible study. I pray that the Spirit of God will draw some close to Himself as they go through this study. I pray that there will be some who, empowered by the Spirit of God, will be committed to living a transformed life of obedience and faithful service to our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Purpose of This Study

This study guide is designed to help you to learn, to understand, and to live what God teaches about the Holy Spirit in His Word, the Bible. God gave us the Bible to teach us how to know and to walk with Him. Take time to carefully read and think about the Scriptures used in this guide. Meditate on them and the truths they teach. Absorb them. Regularly ask God for a right understanding of Scriptural truths and then make them part of you. Commit yourself to making Biblical truths the foundation of your life and to putting them into practice every day of your life. Learn to love God and His Word.

It is my intent to let Scripture speak for itself. The Word of God speaks clearly on the key issues of life. It is my conviction that the Word of God is far more powerful and effective than my own advice or counsel. For this reason, I have kept my own “commentary” to a minimum and have quoted many Scriptures that pertain to the subject being covered.

Take your time as you go through this study. If you go over the material too quickly without much thought, it will have little or no lasting impact on your life.

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Note:

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Bible Translations Used in These Studies

There are five different translations of the Bible used throughout these studies. The translations used are the King James Version, the New King James Version, the New American Standard Bible, the New International Version, and the English Standard Version.

The purpose of this study is to help ordinary people to understand and to have faith in fundamental Biblical truths. When quoting Scripture, I have tried to use the translation which most clearly states the Biblical truth being covered in that part of the study. No particular translation has been favored.

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Understanding the Work of the Holy Spirit

What Does the Word of Truth Say About the Spirit of Truth?

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Galatians 5:25 (NASB)

Be very careful, then, how you live -- not as unwise but as wise making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:15-20

The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him -- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. Isaiah 11:2

The Holy Spirit is the primary member of the Godhead that deals with man. The Spirit lives in every child of God. The Spirit gives us the ability to understand the Word of God and to know His will and purpose for our lives. The Spirit gives us the power to do what God asks us to do. The Spirit of God enables us to daily walk with Him. The Spirit of God leads us to be thankful, to praise, to worship and to fear God. The Spirit of God produces the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. Great joy and blessing are the result of the Spirit of God leading, filling, and controlling our lives!!!

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. 2 Corinthians 13:14

This is a rich study. We will never understand all there is to know about the Spirit of God. However, there is much that we can learn, and the more we learn the more blessed and encouraged we will be.

A Biblical Understanding of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is God. He is a member of the trinity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

Here the "Spirit" is identified as the Lord.

From verse 17, what does the Spirit of the Lord give?

In what way is a Christian who walks with the Lord, free?

How are we being transformed?

Whose glory does a Christian reflect?

How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! Hebrews 9:14

In Hebrews 9:14, how is the Spirit identified?

Who is the only eternal being?

The Holy Spirit is God and has always existed as God.

The Spirit is identified with both of the other members of the trinity. Many times He is simply identified as the Spirit. He is also identified with the Father and with Jesus. He is, without question, an integral part of the trinity.

You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. 2 Corinthians 3:3

In 2 Corinthians 3:3, how is the Spirit identified?

When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. Acts 16:7

...for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. Philippians 1:19

In Acts 16:7 and in Philippians 1:19, how is the Spirit identified?

The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First, He says: "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put My laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." Then He adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." Hebrews 10:15-17

In Hebrews 10:15-17, the Holy Spirit is speaking and is the speaker in the Old Testament passage being quoted. The speaker is identified as the Spirit, but in the passage, He is also identified as the Lord, indicating that the Lord and the Spirit are the same.

In Acts 5:1-10 the story of Ananias and Sapphira is told. In verse 3, Peter tells Ananias that he has lied to the Holy Spirit. In verse 4, Peter states they lied to God. This is another indication that the Holy Spirit and God are the same being.

In order to have an accurate understanding of the Spirit, we must understand that the Spirit is God. The Spirit cannot be separated and treated as if He were independent from God. As God, He is to be loved and worshiped; however, there is no Biblical teaching that indicates that the Spirit alone is to be independently worshiped, or served.

There are some in Christian circles who focus on the Spirit so much that they do not have a healthy

Biblical love, reverence, or fear of God the Father or of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Some have become proud, believing they are spiritually superior to other Christians who, in their opinion, are not “Spirit-filled Christians”. This is not a healthy Biblical perspective on the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit does not draw attention to Himself apart from God. One major role of the Spirit is to focus our attention on the Lord Jesus Christ.

He (The Holy Spirit) will bring glory to me (Jesus)... John 16:14a

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I (Jesus) have said to you. John 14:26

"When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. John 15:26

The Lord Jesus Christ is the focus of our walk with God. The Spirit of God focuses our attention on Him. When we are led by the Spirit of God, we will have a productive close walk with our Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit brings us to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and teaches us obedience to Him. The Spirit leads us to praise God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit leads us to have a reverential fear and worship and awe of God.

The Bible speaks of many different kinds of spirits, including the Holy Spirit of God, our own human spirit, and evil spirits that are from Satan. We can be influenced by any of these spirits. We need to know the Word of God well and walk close to our God so that we can know what spirit it is that we are following.

Biblical Descriptions of the Holy Spirit

1. Isaiah 11:2

Isaiah 11:2 is a very rich verse describing the Spirit of God.

The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him -- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. Isaiah 11:2

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of knowledge, understanding and wisdom. As God, the Spirit has all knowledge. There is nothing the Spirit of God does not know. In addition to having all knowledge, the Spirit has all understanding and He has all wisdom. The Spirit who has all knowledge, all understanding and all wisdom is our counselor and He is a far better counselor than any human could possibly be. The Spirit can and often does use humans to give us wise counsel, but behind a godly human counselor is the divine counselor, the Holy Spirit.

In this verse we find that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of power. The Spirit of God has all power. A Spirit-controlled person has the strength to do all that God asks that individual to do. Without being controlled by the Spirit, the service we do for the Lord comes from our own efforts and is self-serving and weak.

Finally, in this verse, the Spirit is the Spirit of the fear of the Lord. To fear God is to have a right understanding of God, the right attitudes about God, and then responding to God with right actions.

When we fear God, we have a reverence, respect, and awe of God. When we fear God, we continually bow before Him in our own spirit in worship and praise. And when we fear God, we absorb, love, and obey the Word of God.

What are the six qualities of the Spirit given in Isaiah 11:2?

Do you sense the Spirit of God developing any of these qualities in your life?

Do you have a deep desire to be filled and led by the Spirit of God?

We must remember that the Bible speaks of many kinds of spirits, including the Holy Spirit, our own spirit, and evil spirits. An individual who is not allowing the Spirit of God to control him can be deceived into thinking that he is being led by the Holy Spirit when, in fact, he is being led by his own spirit or even deceiving spirits from Satan.

2. *Spirit of Holiness (Holy Spirit)*

...and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 1:4b

...and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Luke 1:41b

About one hundred times in the Bible, the Spirit of God is identified as the Holy Spirit. This is by far the most often used title given to the Spirit. We have become so used to this title that we have lost sight of its significance. The Spirit is holy. The Spirit is pure, separated from even a hint of evil in his character. Nothing impure ever comes from the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit will never lead us to do any wrong or sinful action.

Note: There is no difference between the Holy Spirit and the Holy Ghost. These titles are translations of exactly the same words. The King James Version primarily uses the title “Holy Ghost”, while the newer translations use “Holy Spirit”. They both refer to the Holy Spirit, who is God.

3. *The Spirit of God is the author of the Word of God.*

For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:21

In this verse, prophecy is referring to all of the Bible, not just the parts of Scripture that deal with the future. All of the Bible was given to man by the Holy Spirit.

In the Bible, 2 Samuel 23:2, Matthew 22:43, Acts 1:16, and Acts 4:25 are all verses that indicate that what is recorded in the Bible is from the Spirit. The Spirit enabled human prophets to receive God’s special revelation and to speak it and write it in their own language and style, without error or

omission. The written Word (the Bible) is, in fact, the very words of God.

4. *The Spirit of Truth*

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever... the Spirit of Truth. John 14:16-17a

But when he, the Spirit of Truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. John 16:13a

In each of these verses, the Spirit is identified as the Spirit of Truth. The Spirit cannot lie or deceive. He can be trusted. He will not lead us in any wrong way or lead us to untruths. If what we believe is untrue, it is not from the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is identified as the Spirit of Truth and the Bible is identified by the Spirit as the Word of Truth. Carefully read the following verses:

Sanctify them by the truth; your Word is truth. John 17:17

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth. 2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV)

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the Word of Truth. 2 Timothy 2:15 (NIV)

He chose to give us birth through the Word of Truth, James 1:18a

The Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of Truth, teaches us truth through the Word of God, which the Spirit identifies as the Word of Truth.

The Word of God, which is the Bible, is God's revelation of truth to man. The Spirit of God gave us the Word of God to reveal spiritual truth to us. *The Spirit of God cannot and will not ever lead contrary to the Word of God.* The Spirit of God will never, never, never, lead us to disobey or violate a Biblical teaching or principle.

There are times when people will claim to have prayed about something and they claim that the Spirit is leading them to take a certain action even though that action, in reality, violates Biblical instruction. If an individual feels he is being led to do something that is not in tune with Biblical teaching, then the spirit that is leading that person is not the Holy Spirit. We cannot justify sin by claiming we are being led by the Spirit. What we identify as the leading of the Spirit must be one hundred percent in agreement with what the Bible teaches.

A person who does not regularly absorb the Word of Truth cannot expect to be led by the Spirit of Truth, who is the Holy Spirit. When we neglect the Word of Truth, we are living in disobedience and are not being led by His Spirit. One who is not regularly absorbing the Word of Truth is being led by his own sinful spirit rather than being led by the Spirit of Truth.

I (Phil Benedict) can clearly remember talking to an individual who strongly claimed to be "Spirit-

filled”. He stated that since he was “Spirit-filled”, he had gone “beyond the Bible”. He no longer needed the Bible because he was now “filled with the Spirit”. Yet, as I talked with him about spiritual things, there was glaring error after error in his understanding and thinking. This kind of an approach to Biblical truth is absolute foolishness and possibly even spiritual suicide. To be led by or filled with the Spirit, we must begin a pattern of knowing, rightly understanding, and loving the Word of God.

There is a tremendous amount of Biblical untruth being taught today. In churches, on television, on radio, in books and magazines, it seems as if half-truths, and outright false teaching is more common than solid Biblical teaching. It seems as if teaching that is solid and uncompromising is almost rare.

Those who do not accurately teach the Bible are not being led by the Spirit of Truth. This is very serious and all of us who preach or teach need to work very hard to be sure that we accurately teach the Word of Truth.

Do you regularly read, study, and meditate on the Word of God?

Are you daily absorbing the Word of God so that you can be daily led by the Spirit of God?

Is it possible for a pastor or teacher to claim to be led by the Spirit, but, in reality, he is following his own human spirit?

Do you, at times, claim to be led by the Spirit when, in reality, it might be your own spirit that you are following?

Do you regularly attend a church where you are being taught solid Biblical truth?

Where has your understanding of the Bible come from?

Do you have enough understanding that you recognize half-truths or error when you hear it?

Are you growing in your understanding of the Word of God?

5. The Spirit of Grace

How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of Grace? Hebrews 10:29

God the Spirit, like God the Father, is a God of grace. He is good to undeserving people. What a blessing that He shows favor to sinful people.

This verse is also a severe warning to those who know the truth well but deliberately reject it. They will face the deep anger and punishment of God.

6. *The Spirit of Glory*

If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. 1 Peter 4:14 (NASB)

When we suffer or are ridiculed because of our faith, it is actually a blessing because the Spirit of God, who is also identified in this verse as the Spirit of Glory, rests on us. If we are willing to suffer for His name, we will be honored and even given glory by our God.

Most of us who live in the United States don't actually suffer much because we are Christians. However, God does expect us to make sacrifices for Him. We are to be "living sacrifices". Romans 12:1

Are you willing to suffer ridicule, and still be faithful to our Lord?

Have you made any sacrifices to serve the Lord Jesus Christ?

Is there anything that you are not willing to give up to be a loyal follower of Jesus?

The Holy Spirit and Salvation

The Holy Spirit plays an active role in our salvation. This work of the Spirit takes place automatically the moment we are genuinely saved. It is not necessarily something that we feel and it is not something that we are to seek. If we are genuinely saved, it has already happened.

But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. 2 Thessalonians 2:13

From this verse, (2 Thessalonians 2:13) God saves us through what two things?

The Spirit of God sets us apart from the world and brings us to know God. Once we know God, the Spirit actively leads us to grow in our walk with God.

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit." John 3:5

According to the following verses, the Spirit baptizes us into the body of Christ. At the moment of salvation, we are placed by the Spirit into His body, which is the church.

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body---whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

It should be noted that this is in no way connected to water baptism. Being baptized by the Spirit, or "Spirit baptism", occurs at salvation. Water baptism takes place later as a public testimony of our

identification with the Lord Jesus Christ.

It should also be noted that being baptized by the Spirit is in no way connected to “speaking in tongues”, as some vehemently teach.

Now carefully read the following verses:

Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.
2 Corinthians 1:21-22

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession --- to the praise of his glory. Ephesians 1:13-14

How is the Holy Spirit identified in these verses?

What does God give us, guaranteeing we will go to be with Him?

What is a seal? (not the kind that swims in the ocean - grin)

From Ephesians 1:13-14, what happens when we believe?

What two things does God do, in 1 Corinthians 1:22?

When we die, God will complete our salvation by taking us to be with Him in heaven forever. Our salvation is as secure as God Himself. The Spirit of God seals us. To lose our salvation, one would have to overpower the Spirit of God.

Have you thanked Him lately for your salvation?

Do you worry about whether or not you are saved?

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Romans 8:16

The Spirit of God assures our own Spirit that we are, in fact, the children of God. When we allow the Spirit to lead us, we do not wonder if we are really saved.

The Spirit Lives in Believers

"And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you.
John 14:16-17 (NASB)

In these verses, where does the Spirit abide or live?

These verses teach us that the Holy Spirit lives in or indwells Christian people. The Holy Spirit lives in all Christians. He is our permanent companion.

Genuine Christians do not need to seek the Spirit. He is already in us in all His fullness. We do not just have a little bit of the Spirit living in us; we have all of Him. Our responsibility as a follower of Christ is to fully submit to His leading and allow Him full control of our lives. We do not need more of the Spirit; we need to give the Spirit more of us.

...And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. Romans 8:9b

From this verse we learn that if someone does not have the Spirit living in him, he does not know God. No unbeliever has the Holy Spirit living in him.

From this verse, is a person saved if the Spirit of Christ does not live in him?

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

What does 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 teach about our bodies?

Since our bodies are the temple of the Spirit of God, how should we treat our bodies?

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body. 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

From these verses, what sin should we avoid?

In verse 19, what is the reason given for avoiding immorality?

On-going Ministries of the Spirit to Believers

1. The Spirit of God produces the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of Christians.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

It is the Holy Spirit that produces the fruit of the Spirit. If there is little or no evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in a person's life, it is very questionable if that person genuinely knows the Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 5:22-23 lists the fruits of the Spirit. What are they?

In Galatians 5:19-21, it lists the fruit of the flesh. Carefully read these verses.

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, ... Galatians 5:19-21a

From these verses, what are the deeds of the flesh?

The fruit of the Spirit and the deeds of the flesh are very different. It would be well for every Christian to examine himself to determine which characterizes his life; the fruit of the Spirit or the deeds of the flesh.

Is your life characterized by the fruit of the Spirit?

Are there any of the deeds of the flesh in your life?

Are you willing to give up deeds of the flesh and let God produce the fruit of the Spirit in your life?

What are you willing to do to see this happening?

2. The Spirit is our helper.

"And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you.

John 14:16-17 (NASB)

"But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. John 16:7 (NASB)

Who did Jesus promise His disciples that He would send after Jesus returned to the Father in heaven?

Depending on which translation you are using, the Spirit in these verses is called a Helper, a Counselor, or a Comforter. The Greek word refers to someone who comes along beside us to lead us and to help us. This is a tremendous blessing. We have the Spirit of God beside us at all times, continually giving assistance and direction to all who believe on Him.

We have seen that the Spirit of God is beside us. According to John 14:17, where else is the Spirit?

What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ

Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you -- guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. 2 Timothy 1:13-14.

What does 2 Timothy 1:14 say about the Spirit?

In these verses, what is Paul (the writer) instructing Timothy to do?

Who gives Timothy the ability to follow those instructions?

3. The Spirit enables us to understand spiritual truth.

It is not always easy to understand what is written in the Bible. It is the Holy Spirit, the author of the Word of God, who enables us to understand spiritual truth. A person not genuinely led by the Spirit will be very limited in his understanding of spiritual truth.

9 But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”— 10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 11 For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. 13 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. 14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Corinthians 2:9-14 (ESV)

In verse 10, who reveals truth to us?

From verse 11, who knows the very thoughts of God?

From verse 12, what have we not received?

From verse 12, why have we received the Spirit?

From verse 13, the Spirit does not rely on what?

From verse 13, what does the Spirit use to teach spiritual truth?

This verse makes reference to “spiritual words”. Within Scripture there are certain words that need to be understood if we are to understand the truths taught in the Word of God. Biblical words like grace,

redemption, salvation, repentance, believe, and faith all have meanings that are different from their everyday usage. A good Bible dictionary, such as Unger's Bible Dictionary or The New Unger's Bible Dictionary, can be a big help in understanding the Biblical usage of words.

From verse 14, who does not accept spiritual truth?

From verse 14, why does the unbeliever not accept spiritual truth?

From verse 14, what can only be discerned spiritually?

The fact that the Spirit gives spiritual understanding does not mean that we do not have to study the Word, and it does not mean we will understand everything we read the first time we read it. It often takes time, effort, and meditation on our part. As we do this, there is real satisfaction as we sense the Spirit of God giving us understanding of the Word of God.

Do you take time to study and meditate on the Word of God?

Is the Spirit giving you greater understanding of His Word?

4. The Holy Spirit is our teacher and guide, and He brings to our memory the teachings of the Bible.

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. John 14:26

But when he, the Spirit of Truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. John 16:13a

Notice the close tie between teaching the truth and bringing to memory what Jesus has spoken. The Holy Spirit reminds us of what Jesus said. Our record of what Jesus said is the Bible, and the Holy Spirit brings to our memory what we have learned from the Bible. Most of us have had the experience of remembering a certain verse or verses at just the right time when we needed it. The Holy Spirit is the One who brings these to our memory.

Notice in the following verse that the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to do His work.

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.
Ephesians 6:17

Again, these truths about the Spirit emphasize the importance of learning the Word of God. If a person does not take the time and effort to keep on learning more of the Bible, which is the Word of Truth, then we greatly limit the teaching and guiding ministry of the Spirit in our lives.

5. The Holy Spirit intercedes when we pray.

And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. Romans 8:26-27

We are not given many details of the intercession of the Spirit on our behalf; however, from what we are told, this is a very precious truth. There are times when we want God to work, but we simply don't know how we should pray. Or perhaps we are deeply hurting, and it is difficult for our hurting spirit to put our prayer into words. Because we are weak, the Spirit intercedes in prayer for us with deep love and compassion that goes beyond our own human limitations. It is as if God so values our prayers that through His own Holy Spirit, He steps in and does the praying for us.

The Spirit intercedes for us according to the will of God. This is a prayer that we can count on being answered. God will always answer the prayer of His own Holy Spirit as the Spirit intercedes on our behalf.

Knowing this should encourage us to pray. We may feel weak and powerless but the Spirit is there praying with us as we pray, and God will not ignore the prayers of His own Spirit.

How do you react to knowing that the Holy Spirit intercedes for you as you pray?

NOTE: There is no reference here in Romans 8:26-27 to speaking in tongues. To read tongues into this passage is to force it into the passage and take away from the rich truths it teaches.

6. The Spirit equips us to serve.

A major part of knowing and walking with God is serving Him.

Every person who accepts the Lord Jesus Christ is given "spiritual gifts" which enable him to be a productive servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. A "spiritual gift" is a Spirit-given and Spirit-powered ability to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are three major passages that give us the fundamental truths about spiritual gifts. They are Romans 12:4-8, Ephesians 4:11-15, and 1 Corinthians 12.

Some of the gifts mentioned are serving, encouraging, showing mercy, contributing to the needs of others, leadership, faith, administration, wisdom, knowledge, evangelism, being a pastor, and teaching.

No one gift is evidence of salvation or of a deeper more committed walk with God.

Spiritual gifts are given to build up fellow believers. As we use these abilities to serve fellow believers, we are actually serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 1 Peter 4:10

In 1 Peter 4:10, what are we to do with the spiritual gift we have received?

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, ... 1 Corinthians 12:7-9a

From 1 Corinthians 12:7, the Spirit gives gifts for whose good?

From 1 Corinthians 12:11, who determines who is to receive what gift?

Very carefully read the following verse. Pay special attention to the “His”. “His” energy is referring to God’s power that “so powerfully works in me”. When we serve the Lord in the way He leads us, we have the power of God working through us. We do not have to rely on our own human efforts to do the work God called us to do. This should be a tremendous encouragement to us. We do not have to rely on our own strength, but on His power.

We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me. Colossians 1:28-29

7. The Holy Spirit dwells in the church.

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, ... And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. From Ephesians 2:19-22

In Ephesians 2:19-22, the believers (the church) at Ephesus are called a building whose cornerstone is the Lord Jesus Christ. The church is a temple in which the Spirit of God lives. As we have already seen, the Spirit of God lives in individual believers, but He also lives in the church which is an assembly of believers.

Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord. Acts 9:31

In Acts 9:31, what did the Spirit do for the church?

What was the result?

Notice that the Spirit-led church lived in the “fear of the Lord”.

What does it mean for a church to live in fear of the Lord?

What will be the results of a church living in fear of the Lord?

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. Acts 20:28

From Acts 20:28, who is it that calls someone to be a pastor (overseer)?

This is a very important truth. The Spirit calls individuals to be a pastor. Only men called by God should become pastors. If one becomes a pastor for any other reason such as to gain recognition, authority, or prestige, he is setting himself and the church up for spiritual fruitlessness, defeat, frustration and trouble. The same is true for deacons, teachers and other leaders.

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, ... Acts 13:2-4a

From Acts 13:1-4, how is the Spirit involved in the missions' program of a church?

What did the Spirit do?

8. *What about the "anointing of the Spirit"?*

In both the Old Testament and in the New Testament, when the word "anoint" is used, most of the time it is referring to an actual physical act of anointing an individual with oil. This could be done to promote physical healing or it was done to recognize an individual's call by God to a certain position. Kings, priests, and prophets were anointed by oil in recognition of God's call to hold the position of king, priest, or prophet. An anointed individual was consecrated to the Lord.

And take some of the blood on the altar and some of the anointing oil and sprinkle it on Aaron and his garments and on his sons and their garments. Then he and his sons and their garments will be consecrated. Exodus 29:21

You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Psalm 23:5b

At times a physical object, such as the tabernacle, was anointed to indicate that this site or object, in one way or another, had a special place in God's dealing with man.

Another use of anointing is used in reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is God's "Anointed One". He is the Messiah. The title or name "Christ" means "anointed". Jesus was called by the Father to become the Savior of all mankind.

The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One. Psalm 2:2 Also in Acts 4:26.

All genuinely saved people are spoken of as being anointed by God. All of us are called by God to be His people and to serve Him.

But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. 1 John 2:20

The LORD is the strength of his people, a fortress of salvation for his anointed one. Psalm 28:8

All of us, as God's people, are anointed by God. That anointing does not come and go. We are never more anointed by God at one time than at any another time. All genuine Christians are fully anointed by God at all times. We are all called to a position of service to the Lord Jesus Christ, and that calling does not fluctuate.

It will be a surprise to some that, in the Bible, anointing is not directly tied to the Holy Spirit.

Many confuse the anointing of God with being filled or controlled by the Spirit of God. Preaching or teaching a good message does not indicate a special "anointing". However, it can mean that the pastor or teacher was filled, or controlled by the Spirit. The power of God is at work when a Spirit-filled individual preaches or teaches the Word of God. Individuals who preach and teach in their own strength will be weak and ineffective.

To Be Controlled By the Spirit or to Resist the Spirit

There are several direct commands given that relate to the Holy Spirit. Christians can choose to obey or to disobey these commands. When we obey, there is blessing. We glorify the Lord Jesus Christ and we accomplish the purpose for which God created us. We can look forward to rich rewards in heaven. When we disobey, there is sin and rebellion in our lives and we are spiritually dry and unproductive. When we disobey, we bring trouble into our lives.

You stiff-necked people,You always resist the Holy Spirit! From Acts 7:51

In Acts 7:51, it talks about "stiff-necked" people who resisted the Holy Spirit. It is a sad truth that many Christians are stiff-necked and resist the Spirit of God.

Is your life one of submission to the leading of the Spirit or one of resisting the Spirit?

1. We are to walk in step with the Spirit.

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Galatians 5:25 (NIV)

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Galatians 5:25 (NASB)

A fundamental truth is that we are to walk in step with the Spirit of God. We walk one step at a time. It is interesting that it does not say to “run in the Spirit” or to “take great leaps of faith in the Spirit”. We are simply to walk in the Spirit. When we learn to walk step by step in the Spirit, we will have mastered one of the most fundamental of all Christian life principles — living our lives under the control of the Spirit of God. As we submit to the Word, step by step, we are walking under the control of the Spirit.

This is not a hard concept to understand or to put into practice. When we walk, we walk one step at a time. Our focus is to take our next step in submission to the Lord Jesus Christ. You can walk with God all your life if you take it one step at a time.

Do you walk with God one step at a time?

Are you so worried about tomorrow that you forget your next step?

Do you let defeats of the past keep you from thinking about your next step?

Do you deeply desire to walk with God and to be led by His Spirit?

2. Be filled with the Spirit.

Carefully read **Ephesians 5:15-21** several times.

Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Ephesians 5:15-21

Central to this whole group of verses is verse 18 where we are commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The emphasis of the word “filled” is to be completely filled or “filled to the fullest”. We are not to be half filled but to be totally and completely filled. If we are completely filled by the Spirit, then we are totally controlled and empowered by the Spirit.

The tense of the verb “be” in Ephesians 5:18 indicates an ongoing continual process. We are to continually be being filled with the Spirit. This indicates that we are to be continually obedient to God. I may be submissive to God today but allow resentment and rebellion to come in tomorrow. To be continually filled with the Spirit, one must continually submit and be obedient.

As soon as we have unconfessed sin in our lives or as soon as we become passive in our commitment to the Lord, then we are not allowing the Holy Spirit to control us and we are no longer filled with the Spirit.

As we allow God to fill us with His Spirit, all of the on-going ministries of the Spirit become

fully operational and we function as God wants us to. All of what the Spirit is---knowledge, understanding, wisdom, power, the fear of God, truth, grace, justice, holiness, glory and more---is in us, enabling us to be what God wants us to be as we let Him control our lives.

As we begin resisting the Spirit, the Spirit does not have the freedom to operate as He would like. When this happens, we begin to operate in our own strength. We lose the power of the Spirit and we feel spiritually empty and dry. Our service produces little or no fruit as we function in our own strength.

The Spirit is to permeate every aspect of our life. The Spirit is not a half-hearted sideline to our lives, but the heart and soul of our whole being. We must actively seek to bring every aspect of our lives into harmony with the Spirit of God.

The following questions are all from Ephesians 5:15-21.

In verse 15, what does it say about how we should live?

In verse 16, because of evil in the world, what are we to do?

In verse 17, there is a negative and a positive command. What are they?

What two commands are given in verse 18?

What follows these commands in verse 19?

From verse 20, what attitude should we have?

How are we to respond to each other, in verse 21?

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. 19 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:18-20

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Colossians 3:16-17

Notice that within the context of these two passages that “being filled with the Spirit” and “letting the Word of God dwell in you richly” produce almost exactly the same results. This again indicates the

oneness of the Word of God and the Spirit of God. To be filled with the Spirit is to be in complete submission to the Word of God. The two cannot be separated.

To be controlled by the Spirit, one must be continually absorbing the Word of God. An individual who does not take the Word of God seriously will never be led by or filled with the Spirit of God. Being filled with the Spirit and eager obedience to the Word of God are the same thing. To be filled is to eagerly submit to and obey God's teaching. And our submission must be an eager and cheerful submission rather than a resentful or passive submission. When we eagerly submit and obey, the Spirit has the freedom to lead us and to empower us to be the kind of person God wants us to be.

Read **Romans 8:5-11**. From these verses, describe the differences in a person controlled by the Spirit and a person who is controlled by the flesh (self).

In your own words, describe what it means to be filled with the Spirit?

Is it your desire to be continually led and controlled by the Spirit of God?

It would be well to remember that the Word of God teaches that there are other spirits besides the Holy Spirit. If an individual is not being controlled by the Holy Spirit, then he is being controlled by another kind of spirit. Carefully read the following verses:

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God,
1 John 4:1a

For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him?
1 Corinthians 2:11a

Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? James 4:5

...whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him. Psalm 78:8b

Man's own spirit is capable of many kinds of wrong and evil. We must always be very careful that we do not allow our own spirit to lead us instead of being controlled by the Spirit of God.

Satan himself wants to control our spirits. Carefully read the following verses:

And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. 2 Corinthians 7:14

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. 1 Timothy 4:1

...the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. Ephesians 2:2b

...and do not give the devil a foothold. Ephesians 4:27

If we are allowing any unconfessed sin to be a part of our lives, we are giving Satan a foothold in our

life and we are allowing him to control some of our thoughts and actions. It can be easy to do since Satan appears as an angel of light. We must allow God's Spirit to control us or we are opening ourselves up to be led by deceiving spirits.

How is it possible to confuse the leading of the Spirit of God with the desires of our own spirit?

How can we allow a deceiving spirit from Satan to deceive us?

How do we know if we are being led by the Holy Spirit or by some other spirit?

Today, many teach that to be filled with the Spirit means to "speak in tongues". Some teach that you are not saved or you are not a spiritual Christian if you do not speak in tongues. Some say that the only way to be sure you are saved is to speak in tongues. All of these are false teachings. They are shallow and miss the whole point of being filled with the Spirit. These kinds of teachings may well lead to on-going defeat, not victory, in our walk with God. Living a godly life or walking in the Spirit have no ties to "speaking in tongues".

3. Do not put out the Spirit's fire (NIV), *or, do not quench the Spirit.* (NASB).
1 Thessalonians 5:19

Here we are told not put out the Spirit's fire, or do not quench the Spirit. Resisting the Spirit and quenching the Spirit amount to the same thing.

In order to better understand this verse, carefully read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22, which are the verses surrounding verse 19.

What are we told in 1 Thessalonians 5:16?

What are we instructed to do in 1 Thessalonians 5:17?

What is God's will in verse 18?

What are we not to ignore or disrespect in verse 20?

Prophecy is the Word of God. Prophets spoke the Word under direct revelation from God. Our record of their teaching is the inspired Word of God. We must not ignore or reject the Word.

What two instructions are given in verse 21?

What is the instruction in verse 22?

The reference to fire here is interesting. Fire will burn if it has the right fuel to burn. The Spirit's fire will blaze if it has the right fuel. *In the context here, the fuel that keeps the Spirit's fire burning is our rejoicing, our continuing in prayer, our thankfulness, our study of the Word, our holding on to good and avoiding the appearance of evil.*

Our unwillingness to comply with the instructions in these verses, or any other Biblical instructions, hinders the Spirit of God from working in our lives.

Is there something in your life that is keeping the Spirit of God from working?

4. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit.

Many of us are parents and we know that our children can bring us joy or they can bring us grief. We know how deep those feelings go. As Christians, we are God's children. He is our Father. If we walk with Him, we bring our Father joy. When we resist, we bring Him sorrow and grief.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.
Ephesians 4:30

In Ephesians 4:25-32 which is the passage surrounding the command not to grieve the Holy Spirit, there are at least ten commands given. Obedience to these commands brings joy to the heart of God. Disobedience to God's commands grieves the Spirit of God.

Go through this passage and write down at least ten instructions for life.

Now carefully read **Isaiah 63:7-10**.

In verses 7-9, what had God done for His people?

What happened in the first part of verse 10?

What was the result in the last part of verse 10?

Is it important to you not to grieve God?

Do you bring grief to the heart of God by your actions?

What have you done lately to bring joy to the heart of God?

5. *Pray in the Spirit.*

But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.
Jude 1:20

What two things are we instructed to do in Jude 1:20?

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Ephesians 6:18

What two things are we instructed to do in Ephesians 6:18?

From Ephesians 6:18, how often are we to pray in the Spirit?

To pray in the Spirit is one part of walking in the Spirit. To pray in the Spirit is to give the Spirit of God freedom to direct our hearts and minds, and responding in prayers as He leads. It is not our own human spirit that directs our prayers, but the Holy Spirit. As we pray in this way, the intercession of the Spirit in our prayers becomes very real.

Again, we should note that there is nothing in these verses or any other Bible passages saying that to pray in the Spirit is to “speak in tongues”. To force tongues on these passages is to lose their depth of value and to miss what God is teaching in these powerful verses.

In your own words, describe what it means to pray in the Spirit?

What steps do you need to take to develop this kind of a prayer life?

6. *Biblical examples of being filled with the Spirit:*

There are several places in the Bible where it records that people were filled with the Spirit. Let’s see what the results were.

In **Acts 2:4**, followers of Jesus were filled with the Spirit, and they “declared the wonders of God” (verse 11). Those who were speaking were Galileans (verse 7). However, many of those listening were from other countries and spoke a different language. The Spirit supernaturally enabled the speakers to speak in the native language of those who were listening. Each one heard them speaking in his own native tongue.

In **Acts 4:8**, Peter was filled with the Spirit and he courageously preached the Word of God to the very ones who were responsible for killing Jesus.

In **Acts 4:31**, followers of Jesus were filled with the Spirit and they all spoke the Word of God boldly.

In **Acts 6:1-7**, seven men, full of the Spirit, were chosen to supervise the distribution of food.

In **Acts 7:54-60**, Stephen was filled with the Spirit and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing beside God. He forgave his killers and then died as they stoned him to death.

In **Acts 9:17**, Paul was filled with the Spirit, and God enabled him to see again.

In **Acts 13:1**, the Antioch church was filled with the Spirit and they sent Paul and Silas out as missionaries.

In **Acts 13:9**, Paul was filled with the Spirit and he rebuked a sorcerer.

When we are not filled with the Holy Spirit, it opens the door in our life for the deeds of the flesh as described in **Galatians 5:19-21**.

Which describes your life more closely, the fruit of the Spirit, or the deeds of the flesh?

The Spirit and Unbelievers

Carefully read John 16:7-11. In this passage the Spirit's work in the hearts of unbelievers is revealed.

But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. John 16:7-11.

From these verses, what three things does the Spirit convict the world of?

According to these verses, why is sin a problem?

When Jesus was on earth, He was a shining example of righteousness. His life and message convicted men of their own need of righteousness.

Since Jesus has returned to the Father, who now convicts the world of their need for righteousness?

From verse 11, who is already condemned?

If Satan himself will be eternally judged, can anyone else expect to escape judgment?

The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness (or their need of righteousness), and of judgment. In our telling the gospel, we can co-operate with the Spirit by emphasizing these three things. Sin separates us from God and will bring judgment. God offers us His righteousness, providing a way to escape judgment. What a blessing to those of us who know Him. We do not have to fear judgment!!!

There is an important lesson in these verses about our message to unbelievers. If we are going to cooperate with the Spirit of God we must emphasize sin, the righteousness of Jesus, and judgment. We cannot water down the message to make it acceptable to sinners if we expect the Spirit to work. The plan of salvation will always be offensive to most unbelievers.

And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.

Revelation 22:17

Here in the last few verses of the Bible, the Spirit invites people to come to the Lord Jesus Christ. After revealing the terrible judgments that will come on the earth, there is an invitation to come. There is a tenderness and an urgency in these verses. At the end of the Bible there is one final appeal to come and take the free gift of life.

If you are reading this guide and have never made the choice to put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, you can make that choice today. You, too, can have your sins forgiven and be filled with the Spirit of God. Call a Christian friend, a godly pastor or call this writer, and we would be thrilled to give all the help we can and explain how you can know and walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. You will never regret coming to Him.

The Spirit of God and Preaching and Teaching

As we have seen, God works in and through man by His Spirit. One can hardly overstate the importance of the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the life of God's people. One example of this is in the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. It is extremely important that we who are pastors or teachers continually be being filled with the Spirit of God. If a pastor or teacher is not continually being led and filled with the Spirit of God, his preaching and teaching will be ineffective and weak. In 1 Peter 4:11 there is a sobering truth. The verses leading up to this verse are speaking about using our spiritual gifts. If we have been given a gift of preaching and/or teaching, we are to speak (teach or preach) as if it were God Himself doing the speaking. This is a sobering truth. We dare not take preaching and teaching lightly and we dare not speak without knowing well the truths that God has revealed in His Word. We must be prepared so that we can accurately speak as if God Himself were doing the speaking.

If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 4:11

The importance of studying the Word of God in preparation to teach and preach.

A primary job of the pastor is to teach the Word of God. *The Spirit of God, through the Word of God, instructs us to diligently study so that we can correctly handle the Word of God.*

In the books of 1 and 2 Timothy, the Spirit of God is leading the veteran missionary and pastor, Paul, to instruct the younger pastor, Timothy, in godly living, and in how to be a good pastor.

Carefully read what Paul instructs Timothy and each of us to do in 2 Timothy 2:15. Following is this verse in three different Bible versions:

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV)

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15 (NIV)

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15 (NASB)

Paul, by the Spirit of God, is telling the young pastor, Timothy, to study so that he can correctly handle the Word of God. This was not a suggestion but a command. In this verse the word “study” is a strong word. Give diligence to your study. Work hard. Do your very best.

Teachers and preachers are to work hard at studying the Word. Proper handling of the Word takes diligent study.

There are some who believe that since we have the Spirit to guide us, it is not really necessary to study or prepare. Just get up and the Spirit will lead in what we are to say.

None of us question the ability of the Spirit to lead. And all of us who have preached have had the experience of preparing a message but sensed the Spirit leading us to give another message when we got up to preach or teach. However, this does not mean that we have no need to study or prepare.

There is no Biblical teaching about the Spirit of God which indicates that study and preparation to teach or preach is not necessary. There is no Biblical teaching on the Spirit that overrules 2 Timothy 2:15.

Good preaching and teaching takes study and preparation. The Bible commands it and there is no way around it. Relying on one’s own ability does not produce genuine spiritual fruit.

What are preaching and teaching?

In the Word of God, there are times when preaching and teaching seem to overlap each other. There is not a clear-cut line where preaching stops and teaching begins. However, while there is some overlap, they are not the same.

In the New Testament, preaching is referred to about one hundred times. By far the greatest majority of the times preaching is used, it refers to the preaching of the gospel – the death, burial, and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And with many other words John exhorted the people and preached the good news to them.
Luke 3:18

After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. Luke 8:1b

...and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Luke 24:47

Unsaved people need to hear about the good news of salvation. From time to time, it is also good for Christians to be reminded of how blessed we are in knowing Him as our Savior. That should be an on-going part of our thanksgiving and praise. However, Christians need more than to just hear the gospel. They need to be taught the entire Word of God.

In the New Testament, some form of teaching is spoken of well over 200 times. Teaching goes beyond preaching the gospel. All of the written Word of God is to be taught to individuals who are followers or disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Nehemiah 8:8 gives an excellent description of teaching.

They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read. Nehemiah 8:8

You will find that following this passage in Nehemiah, there was one of the greatest revivals of all time. When people understood the Word, they committed themselves to obeying it.

The goal of teaching is to lead Christians to maturity and holy living. Untaught Christians will remain weak, immature, baby Christians. It is the responsibility of pastors and other teachers to lead Christians to maturity in their walk with God.

We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. Colossians 1:28

...rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. Colossians 2:7

Teaching is not to be taken lightly. It is one of the most important responsibilities of the pastor. No pastor or any other teacher can accurately and effectively teach the Word unless he himself regularly absorbs the Word of God and the Word is richly abiding in him and producing the fruit of the Spirit in his life. A pastor cannot neglect his own study of the Word of God and then somehow expect the Spirit of God to lead him. Neglecting the Word and lack of study is disobedience, and the Spirit of God is quenched in the life of a disobedient pastor.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, Colossians 3:16

In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us. Titus 2:7-8

You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. Titus 2:1

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV)

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. 1 Timothy 4:13

When we do not study the Word, we are being disobedient and by our example we are teaching others to be disobedient. When we teach a young man, who feels called to the ministry that he does not need to study and prepare to preach and teach, we are teaching him wrong. This is serious. The following Scripture is one indication of how serious it is.

Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:19

A pastor is to be a shepherd of the flock God has put under his care. Pastors are to be good shepherds and they will give an account of those in their care. A primary job of pastors is to teach all of the Word of God. If a pastor regularly preaches salvation to the Christians in his care and does little to teach them all the Word of God, he is not doing what God intended and his people will not grow as God intended for them to grow. The people in his flock will remain immature baby Christians.

Is teaching really stressed that much in the Bible?

All of us who are pastors or in some other teaching role need to be aware of each of the following Biblical truths. These truths emphasize the seriousness of teaching.

1. Jesus, the master teacher, set the example for teaching. He spent nearly three years teaching His disciples before He sent the Holy Spirit to them and left the building of the church in their hands. There are many, many references to Jesus teaching His disciples.

2. One of the qualifications of a pastor (bishop or overseer) is that he must be “*able to teach*”. 1 Timothy 3:2

God intended for pastors to teach. If they are not able to teach, they are not yet qualified to be a pastor.

3. In the great commission we are commanded to make disciples and to “*teach all that I have commanded you*”. Matthew 28:18-20

The great commission tells us to teach “all that I have commanded you”. Jesus, as God, is the author of the whole Bible. We are to teach all the Bible. To teach all the Bible requires a lot of study and

preparation. Many pastors and teachers seldom read, let alone study, large portions of the Word. How will we ever be obedient to the instruction given in the great commission unless we diligently study to learn all that we can from what God has written in all of the Bible?

4. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, we are taught that two of the major purposes of the Bible is for *teaching correct doctrine* and *for instruction in right living*.

We cannot teach correct doctrine unless we diligently study and learn correct Biblical doctrine. All too often one simply repeats what he has heard another pastor say. And that pastor may have heard it from someone else and that person may have heard it from someone else. What is said may sound

true, but, in reality, it may not be a sound Biblical truth at all. We wind up teaching sloppy doctrine or outright wrong things---all because we have not studied. God will never bless half-truths or sloppy doctrine, no matter how passionately we preach them or how sure we are that the Spirit of God led us.

5. In 2 Timothy 4:2, the pastor is to rebuke, correct, and encourage with “*great patience and careful instruction*”.

To give “careful instruction” takes preparation.

6. In 2 Timothy 3:17, we see that *correct teaching and instruction equips God’s people to do God’s work*.

Sloppy teaching does not equip people to do the work of God. Untaught or sloppily taught individuals are simply not equipped to do the work of God.

7. In Titus 2:1, we *must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine*.

We must teach the Word accurately and make sound applications of the Word. Again, we must be knowledgeable ourselves if we are to accurately teach others.

8. In Ephesians 4:11-16, we find that right teaching leads to a mature unified church.

The job of evangelists and pastor-teachers is to prepare God’s people for works of service. In 2 Timothy 3:17 we find that this is done by teaching the Word of God. As this is done, the church grows into a mature unified church.

9. In Ephesians 6:17, the *sword of the Spirit is the Word of God*.

The Spirit does not promise to use our talents and wisdom; He uses the Word of God. If, in our preaching, we have very little of the Word, then the Spirit is unable to do His work.

For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power. 1 Corinthians 2:4-5

For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. 1 Corinthians 1:17

When we teach or preach with little or no study or preparation, we tend to do a lot more rambling rather than giving good Bible teaching. We rely on our own abilities rather than on the Lord. Without preparation, our messages tend to be shallow --- a “mile wide and an inch deep”. Shallow messages that basically say the same things over and over again do not lead people to grow in their walk with God.

Some feel that if they preach very loud, they can move people to act. Loud preaching does not take the place of right teaching and it does not indicate the Spirit of God is at work. Loud preaching may stir people’s emotions but if God’s instructions to study are not being followed, one cannot expect there to be any lasting spiritual fruit.

What about Mark 13:10-11?

Some have used Mark 13:10-11 to back up their belief that they can simply rely on the Spirit to tell them what to teach or preach and that study and preparation is not really necessary. Let’s look at this passage:

And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit. Mark 13:10-11

First, from the context, we learn that this is a promise given to Christians who are in the seven-year tribulation period (which follows the rapture). This is a promise given specifically to tribulation saints. It is not given to Christians in this age. Secondly, this is a promise to those who will be arrested and put on trial for their faith. This has nothing to do with teachers and preachers in this, the church age. It is a misapplication of Scripture to take this as a promise for teachers and preachers today.

There is a similar passage in Luke 12:11-12. Again, this passage is referring to when we are brought to trial for our faith. It is not referring to teaching or preaching.

Conclusion

What a blessing that we have the Spirit of God that enables us to do all that God asks us to do. We are not dependent on ourselves but on the Holy Spirit. He leads us and empowers us. He has given us the Word of God to teach us about Himself and to instruct us in how to walk with Him. We are rich beyond measure. You and I can walk with God.

Our Heavenly Father, we praise Your name and we bow before You in love and submission and in reverence and in awe of who You are. Thank You for creating me and for saving me from the awful consequences of sin. We desire to faithfully walk with You and glorify Your name. In Your name we pray. Amen.