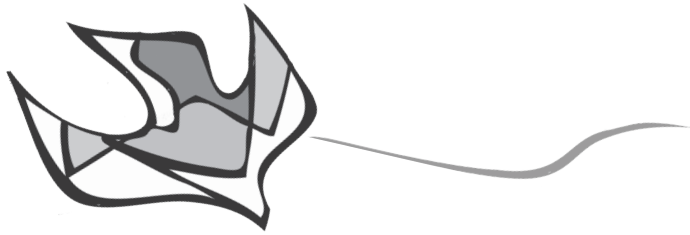




# HOLY SPIRIT

Santa Barbara Community Church • Spring 2023

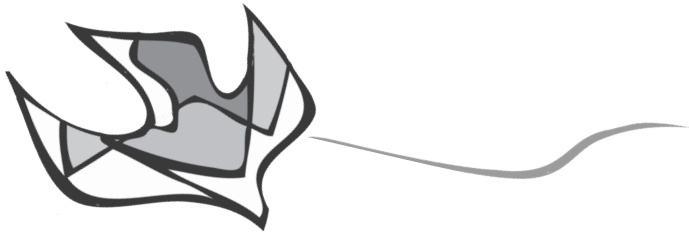




# Calendar

<b>HG Week</b>	<b>Study Number</b>	<b>Sermon Date</b>	<b>Page</b>
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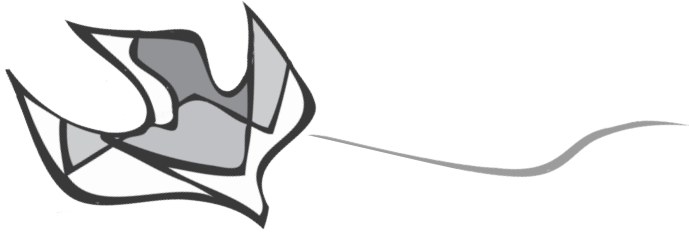
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## Acknowledgements

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Design by Carolee Peterson.

# HOLY SPIRIT



## Introduction

Throughout the centuries, the Church has confessed together, “We believe in one God, the Father Almighty... and in one Lord Jesus Christ, ... and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life...”<sup>1</sup>

Michael Reeves makes clear the importance of this:

What makes Christianity absolutely distinct [from other faiths] is the identity of our God. *Which* God we worship: *that* is the article of faith that stands before all others. The bedrock of our faith is nothing less than God himself, and every aspect of the gospel— creation, revelation, salvation— is only Christian insofar as it is the creation, revelation and salvation of **this** God, the triune God. I could believe in the death of a man called Jesus, I could believe in his bodily resurrection, I could even believe in a salvation by grace alone; but if I do not believe in **this** God, then, quite simply, I am not a Christian. And so, because the Christian God is triune, the Trinity is the governing center of all Christian belief, the truth that shapes and beautifies all others. The Trinity is the cockpit of all Christian thinking. (Reeves 15-16)

Indeed, ours is a trinitarian faith. Even so, one person of the Trinity has gotten distinctively less publicity and has suffered from more neglect than the others. Perhaps it didn’t help that many generations of Christians in the West came to know the third person of the Trinity as the “Holy Ghost”— perhaps because “ghost” isn’t a term we often think of affectionately.<sup>2</sup>

For this reason, maybe it is not surprising that the Church through the centuries has erred in two primary ways in how we think about and relate to the Holy Spirit. First, there are those who virtually ignore the Spirit altogether. These are like the first disciples in Ephesus. When Paul first arrived there, he asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” Their response was honest and to the point, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit” (Acts 19:2). Many Christians today are not all that much different. They may have heard about the Spirit, but have practically relegated him to the sidelines of the Christian life. Content to believe in God and the work of Christ’s death and resurrection, these folks respond as good soldiers – getting involved with church activities and trying to do the best they can.

Others have sought to re-emphasize the centrality and importance of the Holy Spirit to the Christian’s life. Churches in the Pentecostal and charismatic tradition have provided a much-needed course correction to the strands of Christendom that have consigned the Spirit of God to the margins. However, as Gordon Fee (himself a Pentecostal scholar) points out, there are dangers to be aware of in this camp as well. He writes,

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1 Nicene Creed

2 The title “Holy Ghost” came into early English translations of the Scriptures through the Old English *gast* which was used to translate the Greek *pneuma* or Latin *spiritus*.

# HOLY SPIRIT

These Spirit movements have also tended to emphasize individualistic spirituality, so that the reality of the Spirit is sometimes merely experienced in the experience. Such piety has frequently lacked sound exegetical basis or betrayed inadequate theological reflection. (Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, xiv)

The picture we get of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures steers us between the dangers on either side. The Bible makes plain that the Spirit of God is indispensable for the Christian life and curtails potential abuses of hyper-experientialism by providing an anchor to the Spirit's clear voice in the written word of God.

Over the coming weeks, we will dive into this Spirit-inspired Word to examine certain aspects of the Spirit's nature and work. But let's be clear— the goal of this study is not just that we will think rightly about who the Spirit is (as important as that is!), but that we might recognize and long for and cooperate more fully with what the Spirit wants to do in and through us.

Friends, let's be praying fervent prayers throughout these weeks that God's Spirit does something new in us; that he would revive and transform us, both individually and collectively, to the praise of his glory!

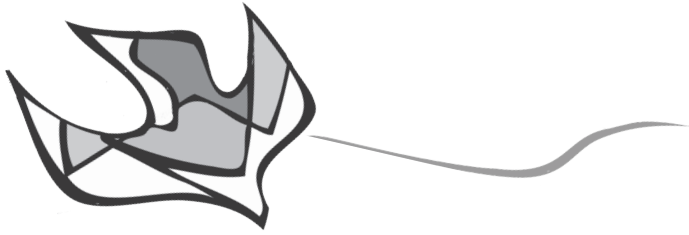


Each study will include a link to a song. Our hope is that they will help you give voice to a desperate yearning for the Holy Spirit's work in us. Listen. Meditate. Sing along. Make these your prayers.

Spirit of God, breathe on Your church  
Pour out Your presence  
Speak through Your word  
We pray in ev'ry nation Christ be known  
Our hope and salvation Christ alone







## Study 1

# Who Is the Holy Spirit?

Homonyms are words that have the same spelling and/or pronunciation but are different in meaning. For instance, “bark” can refer to the sound a dog makes or the outer layer of a tree. Another example is the word “spirit,” which can be used in different ways. Before going any further, use the space below to see how many different meanings of the word *spirit* you can think of.

The words for spirit/Spirit in the Old and New Testaments are also homonyms. The Hebrew word *ruach* and the Greek word *pneuma* can each mean “wind,” “breath,” or “spirit.” Not uncommonly for homonyms, this can create confusion, humor, or profound depth of meaning. John 3:1-15 contains a good example of this. Throughout the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus (a “ruler of the Jews”), Nicodemus is thoroughly baffled by multiple meanings of some of the words Jesus uses including the word *pneuma*.

The wind [*pneuma*] blows where it will, and you hear its sound but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit [*pneuma*]. (John 3:8)

Perhaps it shouldn't be surprising, then, that there is much confusion about the Holy Spirit today- even among Christians. According to a recent survey by Barna, even among those who identify as “born-again Christians” (about 35% of the US population), 62% contend that the Holy Spirit is not a real, living being but an impersonal force—like in the “Star Wars” movies—and “merely a symbol of God's power, presence, or purity.”<sup>1</sup>

For this reason, the title of this study is important, for the Holy Spirit is a *who* (a person) not a *what* (a symbol/thing). J.I. Packer shows how even the grammar used by the gospel writers makes this plain:

John underlines the point by repeatedly using a masculine pronoun (*ekeinos*, “he”) to render Jesus' references to the Spirit, when Greek grammar called for a neuter one (*ekeino*, “it”) to agree with the neuter noun “Spirit” (*pneuma*); John wants his readers to be in no doubt that the Spirit is he, not it. (Packer, 61)

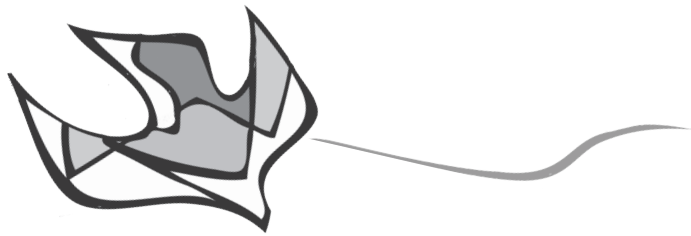
Michael Green, after making the same point about grammar, concludes, “The Spirit is as personal as the Jesus at whose behest he comes.” (Green, 43)

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1. The research from the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University was released on August 31, 2021 and can be found online.

# HOLY SPIRIT

1. Think about your own life and experience. How have you thought (or not thought) about the Holy Spirit? Does God the Spirit seem like an abstract concept to you or someone with whom you have personal experience/history?
2. Whether you know much or little of the Spirit, suppose you were asked about the Spirit by someone who knows nothing of the Bible or the Christian faith. In your own words, write a description of the Holy Spirit.
3. Look up each of the following verses and pay special attention to the verbs. Next to each verse below, record what kinds of things the Spirit does according to that passage.
  - Romans 8:16
  - 1 Corinthians 2:10-13
  - 2 Corinthians 3:6
  - Galatians 4:6
  - Galatians 5:18
  - Ephesians 3:16
  - Ephesians 4:30
  - 2 Timothy 1:14
4. Which of the verses above stuck out to you? After reflecting on these verses, is there anything that you would add or subtract from your answer in Question 2?



Once we understand the personal nature of God's Spirit, we begin to see how the Holy Spirit works in tandem with God the Father and God the Son to bring about life in his people. Consider how leaders of the Lausanne Movement put it:

We love the Holy Spirit within the unity of the Trinity, along with God the Father and God the Son. He is the missionary Spirit sent by the missionary Father and the missionary Son, breathing life and power into God's missionary Church. We love and pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit because without the witness of the Spirit to Christ, our own witness is futile. Without the convicting work of the Spirit, our preaching is in vain. Without the gifts, guidance and power of the Spirit, our mission is mere human effort. And without the fruit of the Spirit, our unattractive lives cannot reflect the beauty of the gospel.<sup>2</sup>

5. Read the following verses and in the space below, reflect on what they teach about the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
  - Matthew 28:19
  - John 20:21-22
  - Ephesians 2:18-22
  - Ephesians 4:4-6
  - Titus 3:4-7
  - 1 Peter 1:1-2

When we start to understand how the persons of the Trinity work together, we will begin to marvel at what exactly God wants for us. As Michael Reeves explains:

As the sun gives of itself– its own light and warmth– in shining on us, so God gives us himself and the blessedness he has always enjoyed. He does so in giving us his Son, and he does so in giving us his Spirit. This is one of those truths that is a bit like silver– easily tarnished and covered with grime. When Christians talk of God giving us “grace” for example, we can quickly imagine that “grace” is some kind of spiritual pocket money he doles out... But the word grace is really just a shorthand way of speaking about the personal and loving kindness out of which, ultimately, God gives himself. (Reeves, 88)

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<sup>2</sup> *The Cape Town Commitment*, 26. The Cape Town Commitment was written in conjunction with the Third Lausanne Congress in 2010, which has been called the most representative gathering of Christian leaders in the 2,000 year history of the Christian movement (*Christianity Today*). Over 4,000 Christian leaders representing 198 countries attended the Congress in Cape Town, South Africa.

# HOLY SPIRIT

6. Reflect on the quote above and examine your heart. What is the difference between wanting things you can get from God and wanting God himself?
7. How has this study challenged your thinking or whetted your appetite for more? What would you like to learn more about the Holy Spirit in the coming weeks?

## Prayer Guide

**REJOICE-** Praise God the Spirit for all that you've learned or have been reminded about him in this study. Thank the Holy Spirit for the ways he works with God the Father and God the Son in bringing salvation to the world.

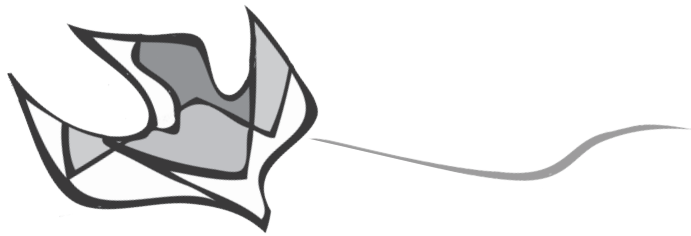
**REPENT-** Confess any dryness in your heart and ask for a deep longing for thorough cleansing that God's Spirit longs to do in us. If you've been ignoring the Holy Spirit, ask forgiveness and pray that God would make you more aware of his presence.

**REQUEST-** Jesus says in Luke 11:11-13, "What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" Ask God for the gift of his presence. Pray for a deeper desire for God in your life. Together with your homegroup, read the statement from the Cape Town Commitment (quoted above Question 5) and let it guide you into prayer.



Holy Spirit You are welcome here  
Come flood this place and fill the atmosphere  
Your glory God is what our hearts long for  
To be overcome by Your Presence Lord

Let us become more aware of Your Presence  
Let us experience the glory of Your goodness



## Study 2

# The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

There are certain people in each of our lives whose presence has made a significant impact on us. Who are one or two people who have made their mark on your life? In what ways have they impacted you?

The presence of God with his people is one of the central themes of the Bible. After leading the people of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt, God instructs them to make him a tent that was to be set up among their own tents. This tent (or tabernacle) was the place where his presence dwelt among them.

When their desert wandering finally came to an end and the dynasty of David's kingship had been established, a more permanent dwelling for God's presence was built– the temple in Jerusalem. This was the reason the destruction of the temple (both the first temple in 586 BC and the second temple in AD 70) was such a tremendous blow to the people of Israel. The temple was the emblem of what made them unique as a people– the presence of God with them.

Of course, Christians know that the coming of Jesus, the one who “tabernacled among us” (John 1:14) and later the gift of his Spirit, made this temple obsolete. But the Apostle Paul wants to make sure we understand that God still dwells among his people. Consider the following verses:

- 1 Corinthians 3:16-17
- 2 Corinthians 6:16
- Ephesians 2:18-22

1. Who/ what is God's temple now?

# HOLY SPIRIT

2. Before going on, let's return to 1 Corinthians 3 to get more context. Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-17. What problem in the Corinthian church do we see described here?

It is remarkable that a church with such obvious dysfunctions is, nevertheless, described as God's temple where his Spirit dwells! Paul is begging the Corinthian church to conduct themselves in a way that reflects their true identity and role in the world. Gordon Fee notes the importance of verses like these:

It is especially with temple imagery that Paul designates the Spirit as the renewed presence of God among his people...There is not a more important word in all the New Testament as to the nature of the local church than this one! The local church is God's temple in the community where it is placed; it is so by the presence of the Spirit alone, by whom God has now revisited his people. (Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, 17, 19)

3. With this in mind, how might you encourage someone who expresses faith in Jesus but doesn't see the importance of being part of a local church?

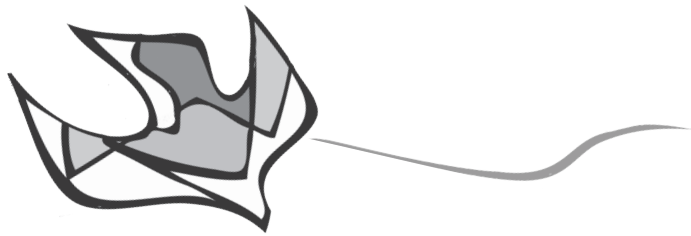
What is true of the gathered church is also true of the individual Christian. Read 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 and, after you've done so, read the words of Major Ian Thomas below.

The Lord Jesus Christ claims the use of *your* body, *your* whole being, *your* complete personality, so that as you give yourself to him through the eternal Spirit, he may give himself to you through the eternal Spirit, that all your activity as a human being on earth may be his activity in and through *you*; so that every step you take, every word you speak, everything you do, everything you are, may be an expression of the son of God living in you. It means letting him think through your thinking, letting him react through your reactions, letting him decide through your decisions. (Thomas, 101)









## Study 3

# The Gifting of the Holy Spirit

Everyone loves getting a gift. True, some of us prefer gifts of quality time, words of affirmation, or acts of service to material gifts, but all of us enjoy receiving gifts of one kind or another. What is your favorite kind of gift to receive?

Anyone who reads the Bible to try and understand what God is like will see that God is generous. God the Father “is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. He has showered his kindness on us...” (Ephesians 1:7-8)

Likewise, Paul speaks of God the Son saying, “You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). This week, our task is to consider how God the Holy Spirit shares in the generosity of the Father and the Son.

1. Before we dive into the Scriptures that teach us about gifts of the Spirit, take a moment to write down some initial thoughts and questions you might have going into this study on the topic of spiritual gifts. What have you learned or been taught in the past about spiritual gifts? What do you find confusing or concerning or exciting about the gifts of the Spirit?

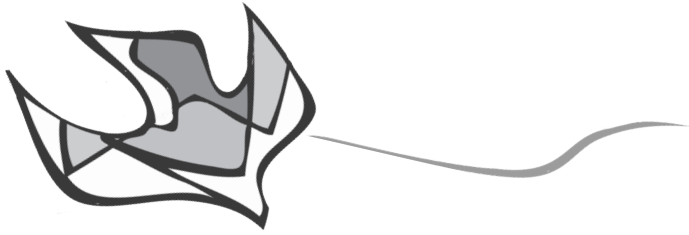
It is important to note that nowhere is there an exhaustive list of spiritual gifts in the Bible. The authors of Scripture seem more interested in exhorting disciples to exercise their giftedness and in correcting abuses of the Spirit’s gifts than in helping Christians identify what exactly is their “spiritual gift.”

# HOLY SPIRIT

2. Read the following verses. As you do so, take note of the examples of various gifts that are mentioned and what these key passages teach us about spiritual gifts in general.

Verse	Gifts Mentioned	Principles Taught
Romans 12:4-8		
1 Corinthians 12:1-12		
1 Peter 4:10-11		

3. From these passages, how would you define a 'spiritual gift'? What is the Holy Spirit's purpose in giving us various gifts?
4. The longest extended treatment of spiritual gifts is in 1 Corinthians 12-14. We've already considered a part of this but read the whole section now. From what you read here, what are God's deepest desires for individual people as they grow in faith, and for all of them together as a community? Note any key verses in these chapters that highlight how Paul understands God's purpose in bestowing spiritual gifts.



5. Why do you think the majestic chapter on love is included right in the middle of this extended passage on gifts of the Holy Spirit?

Most of us don't have much of a problem understanding the gifts of serving, teaching, leading, giving, etc. But what to make of the more extraordinary gifts like tongues, interpretation of tongues, prophecy, and healing?

**Tongues & Interpretation:** It seems that what Paul is speaking about is a supernatural ability to speak an unintelligible 'language' that allows an individual to commune with God at a profound, heartfelt level even if they do not comprehend the sounds they are making. Obviously, this presents a problem if this was happening in a group setting and there is no interpretation given. Michael Green writes,

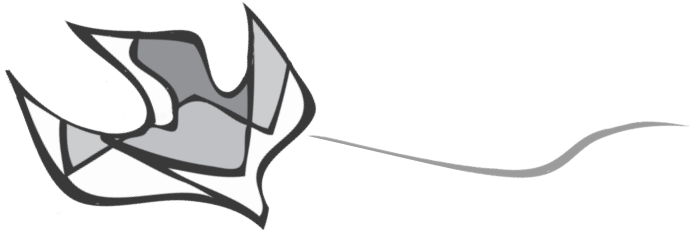
Paul expected the gift to be used in private devotions for the edification of the believer, and in public when the two gifts could be employed together...[Yet] it is perhaps not accidental that every time he mentions tongues and their interpretation, they come last on his list, not first, as the Corinthians would undoubtedly have rated them. (Green, 168)

**Prophecy:** When we hear this word, most of us probably think of predictions about the future. But as Gordon Fee points out, "In Paul such speech consists of spontaneous, understandable messages, orally delivered in the gathered assembly, intended for the edification or encouragement of the people." (Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, 171)

**Healing:** Undoubtedly, there are far too many incidents of supposed "faith healers" who have been debunked and disgraced. While it is clear that God nowhere promises physical healing every time we desire to be healed of some ailment, it is equally clear that God can and does grant miraculous healing to some through agents of his love.

6. Have you witnessed or experienced any of these gifts? What remains confusing or unclear about them?





10. How can we be a church that more faithfully maximizes the gifts of all our people?

### Prayer Guide

**REJOICE-** Praise God for his generosity and creativity in the way he has made us and gifted us to work together for his glory!

**REPENT-** Confess any ways that you've neglected to use or acknowledge your giftedness. Lament the ways that we have over-valued some people's giftedness and under-valued others.

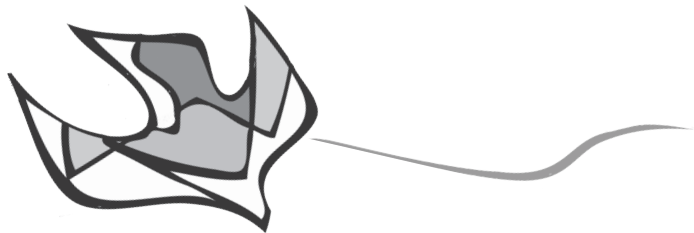
**REQUEST-** Ask God to enable us to be a church family whose common life reflects the truths we've looked at in this study. Pray for those who are not sure what they have to offer, that God would provide encouragement and opportunities to serve in meaningful ways. Pray for our leaders, that they would be faithful in 'equipping the church for works of ministry, that the body of Christ may be built up.' (Ephesians 4:12)



The blessing of the Father gift of grace and love  
The promise of the Savior for power from above  
Oh wondrous gift that's given  
For confidence and mission  
Holy Spirit You make all things new

Spirit of God breathe on me now  
Source of life come revive my weary heart  
Spirit of God shine on me now  
Light of life come ignite my longing heart

# HOLY SPIRIT



## Study 4

# The Fruit of the Spirit

Most of us love stories of transformation. Whether it's a home undergoing an HGTV makeover, a long-underperforming sports franchise becoming a playoff contender, or the rebirth of a trash-strewn empty lot as a children's playground, we love a narrative that reminds us that change is possible. What is one such story that you enjoy?

This week, we're going to consider the results of the Spirit's work in the hearts and lives of God's people by exploring one of the most well-known and well-loved portions of Scripture: Paul's discussion of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. To better allow this familiar passage to strike our hearts, it's important to read the verses we know in the context of the broader passage—and the entire letter—in which they're found.

The Book of Galatians was written by the Apostle Paul to address false teaching and gospel compromise in the churches in the region of Galatia (part of modern-day Turkey). At the heart of his concern was a growing trend of Christians insisting that strict observance of the Mosaic Law was essential for followers of Jesus. Paul writes to these churches to correct this error and, in chapter 1 of the letter, goes so far as to call this teaching "a different gospel" (1:6-7).

Rather than just adopting a new set of traditions and rules, Paul says, becoming a Christian is about becoming a whole different kind of person! Through the indwelling of the Spirit, we begin an ongoing process of transformation that begins at the deepest level of our hearts and flows out into our choices, priorities, longings, and actions.

1. Read all of Galatians 5 and make a note of anything that stands out to you, confuses you, or resonates with you.

# HOLY SPIRIT

2. Paul opens chapter 5 with a beautiful promise and a command that flows from it. Can you identify specific ways in which belonging to Christ has resulted in greater freedom for you?
  
3. Freedom can be a dangerous thing to offer to those who are not completely holy. How does Galatians 5:13 highlight the danger of freedom? Can you think of any examples?
  
4. What imagery or metaphors does Paul use in verses 16-18 to describe life with the Spirit? How do those images help you to understand the Spirit-touched life?
  
5. This whole passage is built on the tension that exists between being saved and being holy. Why do you think that God doesn't just instantly transform his people into perfection?
  
6. Galatians 5:19-21 provide a representative list<sup>1</sup> of "the acts of the flesh," that is, the evidence of a life controlled by the fallen nature rather than the Spirit. What do you think Paul means when he says that such things are "obvious" (5:19)?

Verse 21 ends with a solemn warning that could land differently depending which Bible translation

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<sup>1</sup> It is easy to see that this list is not meant to be exhaustive as there are numerous other sins listed throughout the Scriptures that do not appear here. Paul's intent is to be descriptive of the general types of vices that mark life in the flesh rather than provide a comprehensive account of such a life.





# HOLY SPIRIT

call out and nurture the fruit of the Spirit in each other's lives. How has your spiritual life been blessed by being connected to other believers?

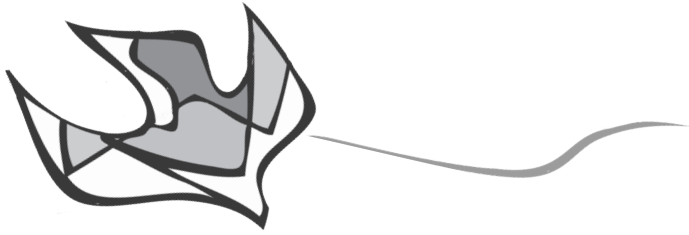
Verse 24 offers a general description of the manner of life of those who belong to the family of God by faith in Jesus. Though none of us are yet what we will be (1 John 3:2-3), we should each be able to give God praise for the ways that he is transforming our lives by the presence of the Spirit.

11. Can you think of specific examples of what it has looked like for you to crucify the flesh and its desires?

12. Finally, let's return to the idea of "gospel," a word that Paul uses frequently in this letter and a word that means, "good news." Imagine that a friend unfamiliar with the Christian faith discovered Galatians 5 and asked you about it. How would you summarize the good news of this chapter for your friend?

As we close this study, read through these words from Gordon Fee that serve to summarize Galatians 5 and to reclaim the idea of being a spiritual person.

The whole of ongoing Christian life, both individual and corporate, is to be lived out in terms of the Spirit. The primary imperative for Paul, therefore, is "walk by the Spirit" (Gal 5:16); God's people are "led by the Spirit" (v. 18); their ethical life is described as "bearing the fruit of the Spirit" (verses 22-23); and because, following the crucifixion of the flesh, they now live by means of the Spirit, they must behave in keeping with the Spirit (v. 25); they thereby sow and reap for and by the Spirit (6:8). This, then, is what it means to be "spiritual" from Paul's point of view; it means to be a Spirit person, one whose whole life is full of, and lived out by, the power of the Spirit." (Fee, *Listening to the Spirit in the Text*, 9)



## Prayer Guide

**REJOICE**- Praise God for the gospel's offer of freedom and salvation apart from our own merits. Thank God for the provision of his transforming Spirit to live in our hearts and guide us to live in ways that glorify God and bring about our flourishing.

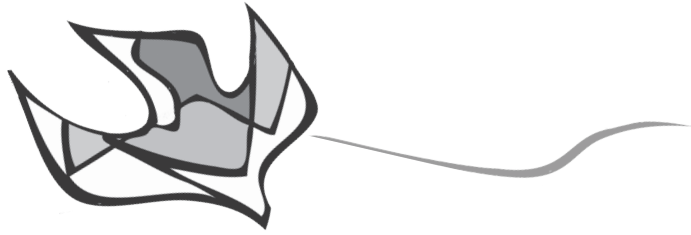
**REPENT**- Confess any ways in which you have lived to "gratify the desires of the flesh" rather than walking by the Spirit. Name the ways in which you have relied on your own strength rather than cried out for the power of the Spirit.

**REQUEST**- Ask God to work in you by his Spirit more and more of the fruit that point to him and his kingdom. Ask God to give you a heart that is open to seeing sin as it truly is and the courage to turn from it. Ask God to make SBCC increasingly into a family that challenges one another toward greater faithfulness to Jesus and greater imitation of his life.



Come down O Love divine  
Seek Thou this soul of mine  
And visit it with  
Thine own ardour glowing  
O Comforter draw near  
Within my heart appear and kindle it  
Thy holy flame bestowing

# HOLY SPIRIT



## Study 5

# The Intercession of the Spirit

Reflect on a time when you found yourself out of your depth and operating beyond your abilities. What was going on? What or who helped you get through (or maybe you're still in it!)?

This week, we are going to consider the intercession of the Spirit. Though most of us may not think much about this particular ministry of the Spirit, the New Testament gives us great reason to cherish his role as an aide to our faithfulness when the path of discipleship is difficult.

Read Romans 8:18-30 and use the space below to make a note of anything that stands out to you, strikes your heart in a unique way, or confuses you.

1. In this section of his letter to the Christians in Rome, the Apostle Paul offers a fairly dire outlook on the world's present situation. Which terms or phrases contribute to the desperate picture?
2. Imagine yourself among the original Roman recipients of this letter. What emotions do you think would have welled up in your heart as you heard Paul's diagnosis of the state of the world?





# HOLY SPIRIT

## Prayer Guide

**REJOICE-** Praise God that, though our world is marked by suffering, his redemptive plans are firm and we can wait with hope. Praise him for the provision of the Spirit who “helps us in our weakness.” Praise God for his plan to conform his people into the image of Jesus, “the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.”

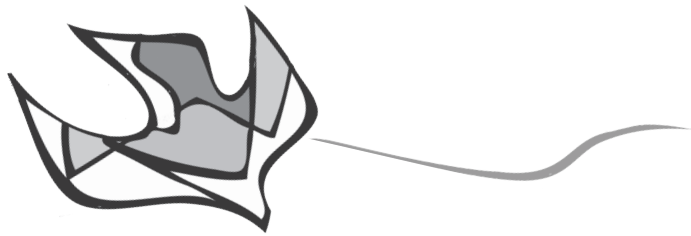
**REPENT-** Ask God to give you eyes to see ways in which your waiting has not been marked by hope and then confess that to your gracious God. Name ways in which you have allowed your weakness to immobilize you rather than driving you to greater dependence on God. Admit any slowness to believe “that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.”

**REQUEST-** Ask God for a greater sense of hope and eager expectation for the unfolding of his redemptive plans. Ask him for greater awe at the gift of adoption to sonship. Ask God to allow you to better rejoice in your weakness and for eyes to see the Spirit’s help in your life.



Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me  
Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me  
Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me





## Study 6

# Listening to the Spirit

Many of us have people whose guidance and insight we seek out in times of uncertainty. Who is someone that you listen to? Can you think of instances in which that served you well?

For this final study in our brief exploration of the person and work of the Holy Spirit, we are going to take a closer look at what it means to listen to the Spirit. To do so, we will consider various verses and short passages to try to work out an answer to these two questions: what does it mean to listen to the Spirit and how can we recognize the Spirit's voice?

1. For starters, read Acts 8:26-40. What do you notice about the Holy Spirit in this passage?
2. How do you envision the Holy Spirit's interactions with Philip in verses 29 and 39? An audible voice? An impression or nudge in the heart? Something else?
3. What would be your typical response to someone who told you that the Spirit told them to do or say a particular thing or that the Spirit led them to a particular location? How might you test the validity of such claims?

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4. Next, read Acts 13:1-12 and make a note of everything that you observe about the relationship between the disciples, the church, and the Holy Spirit in these verses.
5. What do these verses contribute to the idea of listening to the Spirit?

We owe much of our understanding about the Holy Spirit to the pen of the same Apostle Paul we see listening to the Spirit in Acts 13. In fact, much of the material in these studies focuses on Paul's writings! Later in the New Testament, he will offer weighty instructions about relating to the Holy Spirit such as the instruction we have already considered in Galatians to "walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh" (5:16).

6. Read Ephesians 4:30 and 1 Thessalonians 5:19. How do these brief instructions to two early Christian communities highlight the gravity of living in vital connection to the Spirit?

While the need to listen to the Spirit may be clear to us, at times it may be unclear how to distinguish the voice of the Spirit from other sources of insight or guidance. Let's turn now to our second question: how do we recognize the voice of the Spirit?

7. Read 1 John 4:1-15 and note what John has to say about the confirming work of the Spirit.

Though verses 2-3 may seem to portray discernment of spirits as a fairly simple test about the Incarnation, there is more going on here than that. Gary Burge helps illuminate what's going on here and the challenge before the contemporary church,



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12. As we bring this brief six-week study of the Holy Spirit to an end, what lessons or reminders have stuck with you? How might your life look different as a result of what you've learned? What differences are you still praying to see?

As we each learn more and more to "walk by the Spirit," may we know the joy and comfort of his presence in our lives. May we find greater empowerment to use the gifts he has given us to build up the church and expand the kingdom. And may we find ourselves, by his purifying work, being conformed into the image of Jesus, the one the Spirit longs to glorify!

## Prayer Guide

**REJOICE-** Praise God for the living and active communion we can have with him through his Spirit. Praise him that the Spirit points us to unchanging truth in the midst of an often-uncertain world.

**REPENT-** Name ways that you have quenched the Spirit, grieved the Spirit, or ignored the leading of the Spirit. Confess sources of inspiration that you turn to instead of the Spirit. Admit any tendencies you may have to mistrust the Spirit's prompting in your life.

**REQUEST-** Ask God for an ear that is increasingly attuned to the voice and the direction of the Holy Spirit. Ask God to make his ways obvious to you so that you may know the joy and freedom of walking by the Spirit. Ask God to make SBCC a church that readily listens to the Spirit and follows his leading.



Holy Spirit guide my hearing  
 Wake my ears to words You speak  
 In the thunder in the stillness  
 Let Your voice be clear to me  
 Let Your voice be clear to me