

the rock

The
Holy
Spirit
and
You

The Holy Spirit and You

Tiffany was good at volleyball. So good, in fact, that she received an athletic scholarship to a local college. During her freshman year there, Tiffany became a Christian and decided to transfer to a Christian college that also offered her a scholarship.

She made the switch, registered, and was all set to start the new season as the key player on the team until her coach found that she had to sit out the whole season because of an athletic regulation.

The coach who had recruited her felt terrible. So she asked Tiffany to help train the new players who had little experience. Despite this involvement, Tiffany was frustrated. She could only train, sit on the bench, and watch everyone else play.

Why did God have me change schools and then allow me to be disqualified my first season? Tiffany wondered. She knew the rules couldn't be changed. She just had to live with the situation.

It was hard not to have a bad attitude. So Tiffany did the only thing she could do. She took the whole matter to God. She prayed that His Spirit would change her bad attitude. This He did, so much

so that Tiffany overcame her frustration and was able to devote all her energy to making sure the other girls played the best they could. Besides, she could look forward to softball in the spring, when she *could* play!

When Tiffany turned to God for help, she recognized the role the Holy Spirit would play in helping her. Too few Christians are aware of who the Holy Spirit is and what He can do to help us. We pray, as Jesus did, to God the Father. We believe that God the Son became man in Jesus, to die for us and give us life without end. Unfortunately, God the Holy Spirit is not given the recognition He deserves.

The Holy Spirit lives within every Christian (Rom. 8:9). He is on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. He is at work constantly, giving us strength when we are weak, seeking to change us.

In Ezekiel 36:26, God says, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” Or, as we say today, God will give us a new attitude (heart), and the Holy Spirit will help us to become the people God wants



us to be. A heart of stone will not change, but a soft “heart of flesh” is open and willing to change.



While **Keith** was growing up in Queens, New York, he thought of himself as a Christian. But soon he began to question his faith. He had a lot of doubts and fears about it and didn’t know that he could turn to the Holy Spirit for answers to his questions.

None of his friends had answers to his questions about Christianity. However, God the Holy Spirit led Keith to read such writers as C. S. Lewis and Francis Schaeffer, who wrote about the issues with which Keith was struggling. These writers helped him to understand that believing in God or even questioning God is not silly or stupid. This gave Keith hope and purpose. Now he could get on with what God wanted him to do with his life.

As shown in Keith’s life, the Holy Spirit can answer our questions and reassure us when we ask for His help. He is always with us and will never leave us, even if parents divorce or best friends move away. This can help us feel loved and secure.



Mike was a young evangelist who wanted to go to a conference in the Netherlands for evangelists from around the world.

The problem? How could he get to the Netherlands with no money for a plane ticket or a hotel room? Mike prayed a lot about the conference. He believed that God wanted him there and would get him there.

Several days later he found out that an extra conference ticket was available. Several people applied for it, but Mike was chosen to receive the ticket. Mike felt God’s reassurance that he would have a place to stay, too, though Mike didn’t yet know how. Mike flew to the Netherlands, but there was a delay.

The computer showed that his hotel reservation was paid for—and not paid for. Of the hundreds of people there, his was the only strange case. After a few minutes of official discussion, Mike was allowed to attend the conference and was given a great hotel room too. Literally, everything was taken care of. God impressed on Mike the fact that He can and will provide for everything He wants us to do for Him. God rewarded Mike’s faith.



The Holy Spirit worked in the lives of Tiffany, Keith, and Mike. He’ll work in yours, too, if you let Him.

At times the Holy Spirit will change circumstances; at other times He will change you instead. Sometimes He will answer prayers that seem like long shots to you; other times He will teach you faith and patience as you grit your teeth in frustration at life.

You may not always recognize that it is the Holy Spirit at work. But He is there helping you to become the person God wants you to be. There is no way to do it by yourself.

The question is this: Are you willing to let the Holy Spirit soften your heart and give you a new attitude?



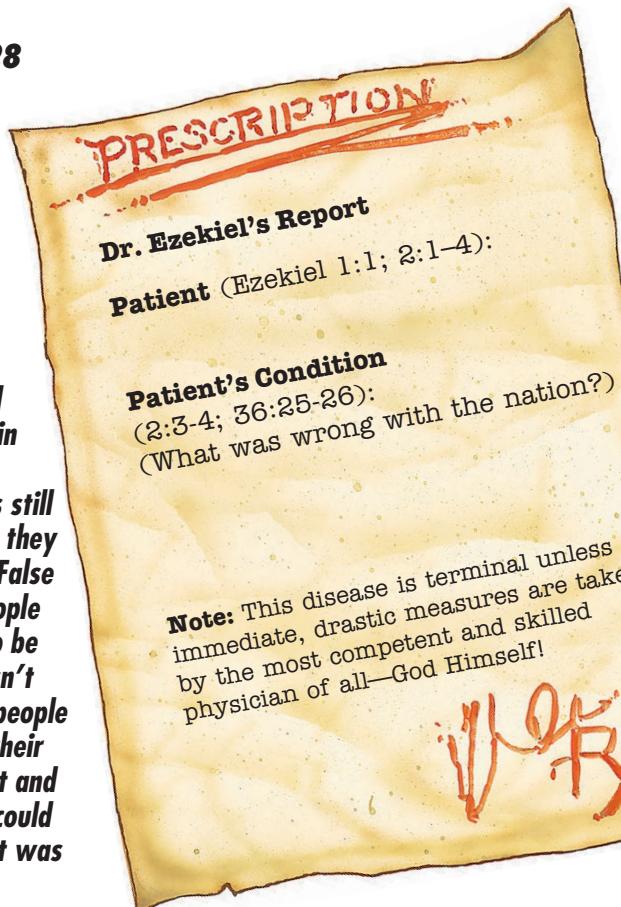
heart transplant guaranteed

Ezekiel 2:1-4; 36:24-28

The children of Israel were in trouble. Because of their idolatry, God allowed King Nebuchadnezzar to invade Judah and carry off many captives to Babylon. (Remember Daniel and his friends?) The prophet Ezekiel preached to the exiled Jews in Babylon.

Believe it or not, the Jews still did not get the message that they needed to turn back to God. False prophets were telling the people that everything was going to be okay. Ezekiel knew that wasn't true. His job was to tell the people just how angry God was at their sin so that they would repent and turn back to Him. Only then could they be healed of the sin that was destroying them.

If Ezekiel had been a doctor instead of a prophet, his medical report on the children of Israel might look like this. Fill out the report by looking up the verses.



Note: This disease is terminal unless immediate, drastic measures are taken by the most competent and skilled physician of all—God Himself!



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Bible Study

Prescription (36:24-28):

(What did God promise to do?)

1.

2.

3.

4.

Why were such drastic measures necessary?

Think about Ezekiel's imagery of a heart of stone and a heart of flesh. How are they different from each other?

This passage is a promise to everyone who truly trusts in God. What difference do you think it makes to have God's Spirit living in you?

What are some ways you can tell that you have God's Spirit living in you?

Ezekiel 2:1-4

¹He said to me, "Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you." ²As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.

³He said: "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have been in revolt against me to this very day. ⁴The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says.'

Ezekiel 36:24-28

²⁴ For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. ²⁵I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. ²⁶I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. ²⁸Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God.

A Call for

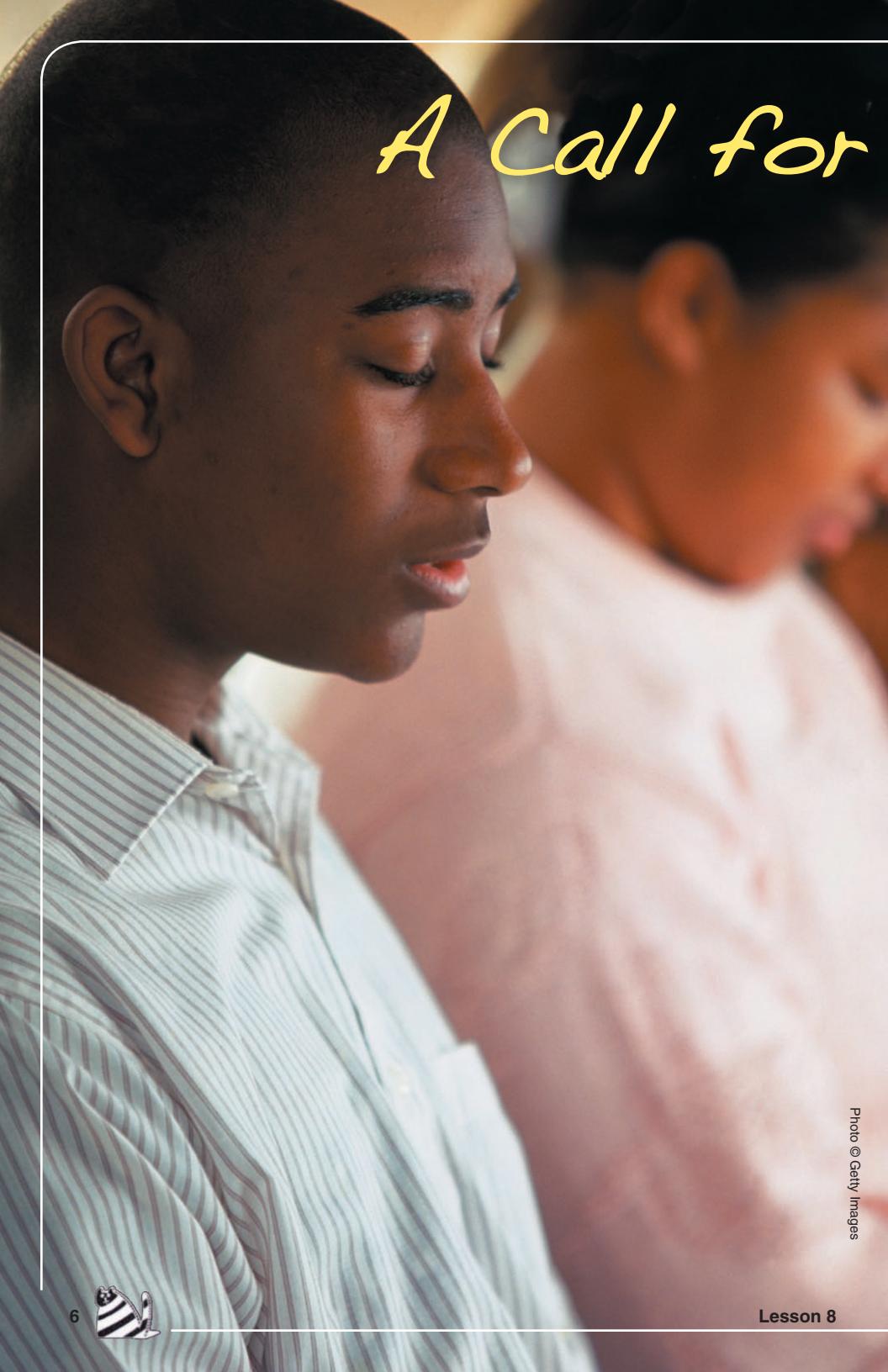


Photo © Getty Images



the Holy Spirit

*Lord, You promised to put a new spirit in me,
And that my heart of stone would be set free.*

*But sometimes I wonder if this is true,
When I'm up against situations where I can't find You.*

*Today I saw my father and mother fight.
Lord, they're in darkness; they need Your light.*

*Will You free their heart of stone?
Or will they be left alone?*

*I try to stand up for what I believe,
My friends at school, they laugh . . . they tease.
Will You free their heart of stone?
Or will I be left alone?*

*I worship You through my voice and song,
I submit to You all my doubts and wrongs.
I feel the crumbling of my heart of stone,
I know that You have not left me alone.*

Can you identify with some of the problems that the writer has? What do you do when you're faced with similar situations?

Do you believe that the Holy Spirit can change even the toughest person? Why? Why not?

Write down something you've been struggling with, and make a commitment to pray that God, through His Holy Spirit, will help you.



"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." Ezekiel 36:26



MONDAY Read Ezekiel 36:26. Take another look at the phrases "heart of stone" and "heart of flesh." Describe what a person is like who has each kind of heart.



TUESDAY Read Ezekiel 36:26a and Jeremiah 31:33. In the Bible as well as in other literature, *heart* usually means more than the organ that pumps blood through your body. What other word picture or symbol could you use to replace *heart* in these two verses? Rewrite both verses using the picture or symbol you chose.



WEDNESDAY Read Romans 12:2 along with Ezekiel 36:26. Have you let God give you a new spirit and a changed mind? If so, explain how God did this for you. If you're

not sure, talk to someone who can explain how to have a new spirit.



THURSDAY Read Colossians 3:1-3. Make a list of things or people that keep you from setting your whole heart on God. Choose one item from your list and ask God to help you keep it in its proper place—after Him!



FRIDAY Read Psalm 51:10, David's psalm of confession. Choose another item from your list and pray about it along with the first item you chose.



SATURDAY Read Ezekiel 36:26 once more. Choose another item from your list, and pray about it and the other two items.

