

LIVING BY THE **HOLY SPIRIT**

Embracing the Spirit's Power for Daily Living

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WEEK 1
Empowered by the Spirit

DAY 1
An Amazing Gift

DAY 2
A Spectacular Entrance

DAY 3
Power Beyond Imagination

DAY 4
Power to Proclaim Christ

DAY 5
Understanding the Spirit

Take a moment to reflect on how the Holy Spirit is working in your Christian walk by writing Yes or No in the blanks below. If you do not sense His impact right now, that's okay. This study is designed to help you to experience the Spirit-filled life.

- _____ I regularly depend on the Spirit for my Christian walk.
- _____ I am energized and empowered in my Christian walk.
- _____ I regularly exhibit love, joy, and peace.
- _____ I worship with joy and excitement.
- _____ I face hardships without becoming discouraged or defeated.
- _____ I trust the Spirit to help me defeat sin.
- _____ I consistently use my spiritual gifts to help the body of Christ.

How do the following verses about the Holy Spirit encourage you?

2 Corinthians 3:17 _____

Romans 15:13 _____

Name two people you know who are Spirit-filled. What stands out about them?

1 _____

2 _____

We do not really discuss the Holy Spirit much today in Christian circles because He seems confusing and mysterious. It is often easier for us to relate to God the Father, since many of us have experience with earthly father figures. We also understand God the Son, Jesus, because He came to us in human form to redeem us and is our Savior. But when it comes to the Holy Spirit, there seems to be a gap in our understanding – He is invisible, intangible, and harder to grasp. Some Bible translations even refer to Him as the “Holy Ghost,” which has also added to the confusion, making some wonder if He is a spooky ghost or specter floating around here and there. As a result, we do not revere and value the Holy Spirit as we do the Father and Son. He is often overlooked, neglected, or forgotten. So let’s change that!

What is the best gift you have ever received other than salvation?

According to Acts 2:38, what gift do Christians receive? Circle the answer.

Money

Fame

The Holy Spirit

Read John 14:16-18 about the Holy Spirit and answer the following questions.

How is the Spirit described in v.16? _____

How long will He be with us (v.16)? Forever Occasionally

We know Him because He _____ (v.17)

Acts 2:38 informs us that as soon as we become believers, we receive a gift; but this is no ordinary gift. It is not some small box of chocolates or a nice little sweater; it is the Holy Spirit, God Himself, who now comes and lives in us.

In John 14-17, known as the Farewell Discourse, Jesus' time of crucifixion had arrived, and he was having the Last Supper with His disciples. Can you imagine the disciples' sadness and distress? For three wonderful years, Jesus had walked with the disciples, taught them, encouraged them, strengthened them, and even rebuked them; but now He was going to His death. Understanding their anxiety, Jesus comforted the disciples by telling them that He would send them a Helper, the Holy Spirit; a presence that would actually live and abide in them forever (John 14:16-18). The Greek word *παράκλητο* (*parakletos*) means helping presence and has a beautiful array of meanings: advocate, counselor, helper, exhorter, and encourager. None of these terms truly do justice to the fullness of its meaning but rather reveal the all-encompassing nature of the Spirit's help. A *paraclete* was a person who came alongside someone to assist them. Jesus was saying that He would leave the disciples with another *paraclete*. Jesus was the original *paraclete* but was sending another Helper, the Holy Spirit in His place. Because the Spirit now indwells believers, we can experience incredible intimacy and fellowship with God in a way we never imagined.

In John 14:17, Jesus told the disciples that the Spirit had dwelled with (*παρῶν*) them, but a time was coming when He would actually dwell in (*ἐν*) them. Previously, the Spirit had been with the Jewish people, guiding them through a pillar of fire (Nehemiah 9:19-20) and abiding in their midst in the Tabernacle and Temple, but now He would actually dwell in them.

As mentioned above, the Holy Spirit is our Comforter, Advocate, Helper, Encourager, and Counselor. Which one of these do you need most right now? Why?

What did Jesus tell the disciples in John 16:7? How does this reveal the importance of the Holy Spirit?

When a believer becomes saved, the Holy Spirit immediately takes residence in him or her, and it is permanent (John 14:16). The indwelling presence of the Spirit is the hallmark of every believer and is vital to our lives. The Spirit's presence is then manifested in a variety of ways: He comforts, helps, leads, guides, sanctifies, intercedes, empowers for service, serves as a seal, and performs countless other ministries which we will explore in this study. The main reason that the Spirit indwells believers is so that we can perform God's will and glorify Christ (John 16:14).

In John 16:7, Jesus told His disciples that it was actually for their "good" that He was going away. As hard as it must have been for the disciples to hear this, Jesus explained that unless He left, the Helper would not come to them. The significance of Jesus' words should not be overlooked. Jesus was God Himself in the flesh, and yet it was to the disciples' advantage that He should leave them so they could receive the Spirit. This reveals the supreme importance of the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence in believers.

It really is an amazing thing that the Holy Spirit, God Himself, now lives and abides in us. The Greek word *meno* translated abides means "by your side, at home with you, not merely with you, in the midst of you."¹ Take a moment and really reflect on that. ***God now lives and dwells in us.*** God, who formed the universe, created man, upholds all things, knows all things, and possesses untold power, this wondrous God now dwells in us. How utterly amazing! How could we ever believe that God is impersonal or distant? God is not a million miles away, distant and detached from our lives, but *in us*, actively guiding, teaching, and helping us. He provides us with unimaginable intimacy, unparalleled strength, and unmatched power in our Christian walks!

DAY 2

A Spectacular Entrance

And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

– Acts 2:2-4

What is the one essential ingredient for believers and the church to thrive? Is it immense power and vast wealth? Is it political influence and social prestige? Is it charismatic leaders and visionary strategists? Surprisingly, the early church had none of these things, and yet they had everything they needed because they had the Holy Spirit! The Spirit allowed early believers to lead countless people to Christ, establish numerous churches, and grow in Christian character. The same Holy Spirit is available to us today, empowering us to fulfill God's will and bring glory to His name.

The great theologian, Arthur Pink, noted that just as Christ was the promise of the Old Testament, so the Holy Spirit is the promise of the New Testament.² This does not mean that the Holy Spirit was not active or present in the Old Testament, but rather that we would experience His fullness now.

Jesus had promised the coming of the Holy Spirit. What event had to occur before the Spirit came at Pentecost (John 7:39)?

Read Acts 2:1-4 about the coming of the Holy Spirit and answer the following questions.

What feast was occurring (v.1)? Passover Pentecost

What signs accompanied the coming of the Spirit (vv.2-4)? _____

What happened to the believers (v.4)? _____

Describe the coming of the Spirit. Circle all that apply.

Normal

Sudden

Quiet

Invisible

Expected

Unique

Supernatural

Miraculous

Divine

Challenge

Many scholars believe that the following Scriptures foreshadowed Acts 2. Select any verse to look up. What does it say?

Joel 2:28-29

Isaiah 32:15-18

Isaiah 44:3

Have you ever been with a group of believers where it was clear that the Holy Spirit was present and moving? Explain.

In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit was poured at Pentecost in a sudden, spectacular, and supernatural way, with sounds of rushing winds, tongues of fire, and believers being filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:1-4).³ One would think that this dramatic entrance would be how Jesus chose to enter the world rather than His humble arrival. Instead, it is the Holy Spirit who comes in a spectacular way.

Pentecost, which means “fiftieth,” was also known as the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot). It was one of three major feasts required for Jewish observance and occurred fifty days after Passover. This feast was rich in symbolism and celebrated the Jews’ harvest and their firstfruits from the harvest (Leviticus 23:15-21).⁴ Interestingly, Scripture states that Jesus was considered the firstfruits from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). Some scholars believe that the giving of the Law fell on Pentecost, adding to the specialness of the occasion.⁵ If this is true, the parallel is striking: just as the Jews delighted in receiving the Law, now Christians rejoice in receiving the Spirit.

The timing for the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost was just right: the Spirit could not have come sooner, for it was important that Jesus be glorified.⁶ Three major signs accompanied the coming of the Spirit:

- Rushing Winds → There came from heaven a noise like rushing winds as the 120 believers were gathered, indicating the powerful presence of God. In John 3:6-8, wind is associated with the Spirit. The noise provided an audible element to the event.

- Tongues of Fire → Fire was often associated with God’s presence. For example, God approached Moses through a burning bush (Exodus 3:1-5); similarly, a pillar of fire led Israel (Exodus 13:21-22). The tongues of fire provided a visible sign to the event.

- Speaking in Tongues → Believers were filled with the Spirit and started speaking in tongues.⁷ This provided a spiritual and miraculous sign to the event.

The coming of the Holy Spirit fulfilled several Old Testament prophecies (Joel 2:28-32, Isaiah 32:15, Isaiah 44:3), as well as Jesus' promise to the disciples (John 14:16-17, John 14:26, John 15:26-27, John 16:7-15).⁸ The Holy Spirit had always been active in the world, but after Pentecost, there was a change in how the Spirit interacted with people. In the Old Testament, the Spirit came upon select Jewish believers temporarily to empower them to complete a task; then He would depart from them. Now, the Spirit would permanently indwell all believers, both Jews and Gentiles, creating unity in the body of Christ.

Read Acts 2:5-13 and describe what happened. What was the crowd's response?

Challenge

How was Acts 2 a reversal of God's judgment on the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9?

In Acts 2:14-36, Peter proclaimed the gospel to the crowd. What was the result of his preaching (Acts 2:37-41)?

At Pentecost, the people were amazed because they heard the disciples speaking in their own languages. Since Pentecost was a required feast for Jewish men, many nationalities were in attendance, arriving from over fifteen geographical locations. Each of those citizens heard Peter

and the others in his or her own language. The result was varied. Some listeners mocked and scorned the believers, assuming they were drunk; other people, however, were perplexed and confused. Still others were amazed and astonished, listening intently to what was said. How could these Galileans, unschooled and uneducated men, speak in so many different dialects?

Many scholars believe that Pentecost was a reversal of God's judgment on the Tower of Babel. In Genesis 11:1-9, the people refused to listen to God and continued to build a tower to make a name for themselves. Because of their disobedience, God scattered the people and confused man's language so they could not understand one another. Now at Pentecost, He allowed multiple languages to be heard and united believers through the Spirit.

After hearing the crowd's response, Peter boldly preached the gospel to them. He began by addressing and refuting the claim that the believers were drunk, instead explaining the true significance of the events they had witnessed. Peter then cited and explained three significant Old Testament passages: Joel 2 which foretold God pouring out His Spirit; Psalm 16:8-11 which prophesied the Messiah's resurrection; and Psalm 110 which spoke about the Messiah's exaltation. Peter then declared that Jesus, whom the Jews had crucified, was indeed the Messiah, the Son of God, risen from the dead. The crowd was deeply affected by Peter's words and was cut to the heart (Acts 2:37). When Peter finished speaking, 3,000 people were saved. Imagine, a short time before this, the people were screaming "crucify Him [Jesus]" and now they had repented and accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. There is no doubt that the Holy Spirit had come in a spectacular way!

DAY 3

Power Beyond Imagination

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.

– Ephesians 3:20

Several years ago, my ministry team decided to host an annual luncheon in our community. It was a fun girls' afternoon for ladies to gather, fellowship, and be refreshed by the Word. While preparing for the event, I felt a strong prompting from the Holy Spirit to donate 1,000 copies of my book, *Reclaiming Your Joy*, to a local women's prison. Since our ministry was still new, we did not have the resources to fund the donation ourselves, so we would need help from others.

The night before the luncheon during a time of prayer and fasting, I sensed the Lord urging me to share this vision at the event, but I struggled with the idea. The luncheon was meant to be lighthearted and uplifting, and nothing seems to change the tone of an event faster than asking for money.

The next day, I chose to follow the Spirit's prompting and shared the opportunity with the women in attendance. After the luncheon ended, our team discovered that we had received enough donations to cover nearly 700 books, and this was with only 60 women present! Within two weeks, every dollar needed for the 1,000 books had been raised. All I could think was "Wow." If God worked this quickly to raise the funds for the books, can you imagine the impact on the ladies in the prison! When it comes to our Christian walks, we do not have to possess the greatest talents, abilities, personalities, or financial resources; we need only rely on the Holy Spirit and allow Him to empower us.

Read Acts 1:4-8. When the Holy Spirit came upon the people, what would they receive?

Love

Power

Purpose

How does Romans 8:11 reveal a glimpse of the power of the Holy Spirit?

What surprising thing did Jesus say in John 14:12? Fill in the blanks (NASB).

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who _____, the works that I do, he will do also; and _____ than these he will do; because I go to the Father.

Challenge

How was the Holy Spirit involved with Stephen? Read Acts 6:1-6 and Acts 7:54-60 and answer the following questions.

Describe Stephen based on Acts 6:1-6.

What happened in Acts 7:54-60?

What challenges or encourages you about Stephen?

Name two areas where you currently need the Holy Spirit's power.

1 _____

2 _____

After His death and resurrection, Jesus told the disciples to remain in Jerusalem and wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-8). Let's take a moment and reflect on that. The disciples had learned from Jesus for three years, watched Him perform countless miracles, witnessed Him raise people from the dead, and even performed miracles themselves (Mark 6:12-13). They had seen the risen Jesus, but rather than going out and proclaiming the gospel as we would expect, Jesus told them to wait. Why? Because they would need the power of the Holy Spirit to perform their service. If the disciples, who had experienced Jesus in the flesh, still had to wait on the Spirit, then how much more do we desperately need Him?

The Holy Spirit empowered people in the early church to teach the Word of God, courageously proclaim the gospel, and use their spiritual gifts to advance the Kingdom. He gave courage to the weak, strength to the weary, and confidence to the uneducated. Robert Coleman made this interesting comment about the disciples:

What is more revealing about these men is that at first they do not impress us as being key men. None of them occupied prominent places in the Synagogue, nor did any of them belong to the Levitical priesthood. For the most part they were common laboring men, probably having no professional training beyond the rudiments of knowledge necessary for their vocation. Perhaps a few of them came from families of some considerable means, such as the sons of Zebedee, but none of them could have been considered wealthy. They had no academic degrees...they would surely be considered as a rather ragged aggregation of souls. One might wonder how Jesus could ever use them.⁹

The disciples, who seemed to have everything against them, defied the odds through the power of the Holy Spirit and turned the world upside down. They helped grow the early church and spur on the legacy of Christ, not because of their degrees, backgrounds, and skills but because they allowed the Holy Spirit to work through them to bring glory to God.

Acts 1 reminds us that the Holy Spirit will provide *all* we need. In Acts 1:8, Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples, they would receive "power" (Greek word *dynamis* from which we get

the English word dynamite). When we speak of “power,” we are not talking about some little spark, but rather explosive power. Romans 8:11 states that believers now have access to the same power in them that raised Jesus from the dead. This power is available to all believers in our daily Christian walks as we seek to perform God’s will. Believers need never fear because we lack resources or strengths. The Spirit will always provide the enablement necessary to perform God’s will and to bring God glory. In fact, Jesus Himself said that believers would perform even greater works than Him (John 14:12). Can you imagine doing even greater works than Jesus? And yet when Peter preached the gospel on Pentecost, over 3,000 people believed!

A. W. Tozer challengingly remarked, “If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, ninety-five percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference.” What do you think of Mr. Tozer’s statement? Do you see the Spirit moving powerfully in believers and the church or are they trusting more in themselves and their natural abilities?

Do you truly rely on the Holy Spirit in your life and service to God?

- Completely depend on the Holy Spirit.
- Somewhat trust in the Holy Spirit but tend to rely on myself.
- Need to grow in this area because I usually depend on myself and my resources.

The Holy Spirit is not a luxury that we can choose to use or not use in our Christian walks as we perform God's work. He is an absolute necessity in our lives and service. Nothing can compensate for His lack of power in our lives – nothing – not personality, not abilities, not money, not position. If we choose to depend on ourselves instead of the Holy Spirit, our lives will lack power, and it will weary and tire us. Some of us are exhausted because we are trying to live the Christian walk in our own strength.

Dependence on the flesh may produce lots of earthly works, but it will not please God (Romans 8:6-8) and has little enduring value. We need to stop trusting in our resources, our strengths, and our programs, and start relying on the Holy Spirit. Our pragmatism will only take us so far. One day when I was driving to my seminary class, which was located in a rough part of town, I passed a man standing on the corner asking for help. I debated whether to stop: if I did, I would be late to my class, so I kept driving. But the Holy Spirit stirred my heart, and I couldn't ignore it. I turned around and gave him a small care package with food, a few dollars, and a gospel tract. We have to be careful to not allow our pragmatism to hinder the Spirit's leading.

Since it is often difficult to outwardly determine works that result from the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and those that result from the flesh, we are often tempted to trust in our strengths and our abilities to accomplish God's will. As a result, we end up using earthly means to try to achieve godly goals. Though such works may seem impressive on the outside, they will be hollow on the inside because they lack the power of the Holy Spirit. Only depending on the Spirit produces works that please God and have a lasting impact because only by relying on the Holy Spirit does God receive the glory.

What encouragement do you find in Ephesians 3:20-21?

Describe something that the Holy Spirit has done through you or someone else that you could never have imagined.

After faithfully working at a company for sixteen years, my husband was unexpectedly fired. After several months of searching, he finally found a new job, but it was more than an hour away from our home. As a result, we made the decision to move. We found a house that had everything we were looking for, but it was at the top of our budget. Still, we decided to put in a low offer and entered into several rounds of negotiations, during which the price kept increasing. Eventually, we decided to walk away, not wanting to stretch ourselves financially. Then, out of the blue, our real estate agent called with surprising news: the sellers had decided to accept our original low offer – not our current one, but the very first offer we made because they were Christians and felt God wanted them to be a blessing to us. Our agent, who had been in the real estate business for over 30 years, was stunned, as were we. But we praised God! He had done something completely unexpected and amazing. As we reflect on that time, we realized that it was not just about us. Our faith was strengthened, but so was our real estate agent's. God placed us in this house so that we could also help those around us and share the gospel with them. God works in incredible ways! While His blessings may not always be financial, He is always moving in ways beyond what we can imagine.

I love Paul's description of God's power in Ephesians 3:20-21, don't you? If we are honest, we all seek power in our Christian walks: power to live for God, to bring Him glory, to love others unconditionally, to forgive what seems unforgiveable, to serve others selflessly, to remain content in difficult situations, to exercise patience, to courageously share the gospel, and to become more like Christ.

In Ephesians 3:20-21, Paul reminds us that God is able to do *abundantly more* than all we ask or imagine. Though it does not translate well in English, in the Greek, the *exceedingly, abundantly more* is a rare

double compound to stress its power (in essence, meaning “beyond measure, superabundantly, infinitely more than”).

God is not just able to do **all** that we ask

But to do **abundantly more** than all that we ask

And not just that, but to do **exceedingly** abundantly more than all that we ask!

Most of us have pretty vivid imaginations, but God is able to do even greater works in us than anything we can imagine. Wow!

I cannot stress enough the importance of us living by the Spirit in our Christian journeys. Whether it is a task that He places before us or a virtue that He needs to grow in us, the Holy Spirit will empower us. If we try to live our Christian walks in our power or depending on our resources, we will fail miserably; and worse yet, we may become discouraged and disheartened. God can do more in one week of us in the Spirit than a lifetime of us relying on ourselves and our resources. The Holy Spirit transformed ordinary men into great disciples, gave courage to the weak, and provided strength to the weary. Imagine what He could do in your life!

DAY 4

Power to Proclaim Christ

And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

– Acts 4:31

One of the greatest evangelists of the twentieth century, D. L. Moody, had little formal schooling, possessing only a fifth or sixth grade education. Yet he never allowed his lack of education to hinder him in

his Christian walk and service to the Lord. He knew and understood that the Lord provided the strength and power for his ministry through the Holy Spirit. He only needed to obey the Spirit's leading and rest in His power. Over his lifetime, he led hundreds to Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Yesterday we discussed how the Spirit provides the power we need for our Christian walks and for our service in the Kingdom. Another way the Spirit empowers us is by helping us to boldly proclaim Christ and share the gospel.

Re-read Acts 1:8 from yesterday. In what 4 places would believers be God's witnesses?

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Do you regularly share the gospel? Place an X on the line that best describes you.

Never Share

Constantly Share

If you are not regularly sharing the gospel, then what is holding you back? Check all that apply.

- It makes me nervous and scares me.
- I do not feel like I know enough.
- I am worried about what others will think of me or that I will offend them.
- I fear that I will be rejected, ridiculed, or persecuted.
- Other _____

Read Acts 4:1-12 about Peter and John’s arrest and answer the following questions.

What was happening in the early church (vv.1-4)? _____

How did Peter respond to the religious rulers (vv.5-10)? _____

How did Peter describe Jesus (v.11)? Circle the answer.

Chief cornerstone

A little rock

What did Peter say about salvation in Acts 4:12? Fill in the blanks (NASB).

And there is salvation in _____ for there is no

_____ that has been given among

men by which we must be saved.

The Book of Acts informs us about the establishment of the early church after Jesus’ death and resurrection. In Acts 4, we learn that the apostles’ teachings stirred strong opposition from the Sadducees. The Sadducees were one of the major sects of Judaism, but they only adhered to the first five books of the Old Testament, called the Pentateuch. They were considered the aristocrats because they mainly consisted of wealthy individuals and members of the priestly class. They were troubled by the apostles’ message about Jesus’ resurrection because they rejected the belief in the bodily resurrection.

Because the apostles’ teaching was a threat to their religious and political power, the religious rulers brought Peter and John before them, asking them by what power they had done these works. The religious leaders were referring to Peter and John healing a beggar who had been lame from birth (Acts 3). Peter, filled with the Spirit, responded

to the Sanhedrin by saying that they had healed the crippled beggar in the name of Jesus and then quoted Psalm 118:22: “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.” The Jews rejected Jesus, who was the chief cornerstone. This was not a casual statement that the Sanhedrin could overlook: the council clearly understood Peter’s implication that they had rejected the Savior.

Peter boldly proclaimed the gospel to the Sanhedrin, not diluting or watering down its message. Though Peter and John knew their Lord was beaten and crucified and that the same fate awaited them, they chose not to succumb to the Sanhedrin’s pressure but remained true to their Lord. They defended Him as passionately as they would a loved one. What about us? Do we defend our Lord the way we would defend our spouse, children, or loved ones?

It is interesting to note that opposition to Jesus and the apostles occurred not only from the world but also from the “religious” people. Sometimes as the Lord calls us to stand firm for Him, it is not the world, but the religious people, that may serve as our greatest opposition.

What encouragement do you receive from Romans 10:14-15?

Exercise

Let’s make our feet beautiful by sharing the gospel (Romans 10:15). Choose two of the actions below and commit to completing them within the next two to three months.

- Share the gospel with someone.
- Go on a short-term mission trip.
- Pray daily for a specific country to experience salvation.
- Write an encouraging letter to a missionary on the field.
- Support a child from Compassion International.
- Donate to an international missionary organization.
- Serve on the mission field.

Challenge

What encouragement did Jesus provide in Matthew 10:19-20?

Did you notice that Peter boldly proclaimed the Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit? Previously, Jesus informed His disciples that a time of trials would come, but to not worry for the Spirit would provide the words to say (Matthew 10:19-20). The Holy Spirit always gives us courage and grace in our moments of need.

Continue to read Acts 4:13-31 about Peter and John and answer the following questions.

How did the Sanhedrin describe Peter and John? _____

What did the Sanhedrin command Peter and John to stop doing?

How did Peter and John respond? _____

What happened in v.31? _____

When difficult circumstances arise, do you normally pray that God would remove the pain and suffering or for boldness to stand? Explain.

Challenge

What encouragement do you receive about courageously sharing the gospel from the following verses?

Ephesians 6:19-20

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

1 Thessalonians 2:2

The Sanhedrin described Peter and John as confident and courageous (Acts 4:13). The Greek word for confidence *parrhesia* means “freedom or frankness in speaking...freedom in speaking all that one thinks or pleases.”¹⁰ Peter did not hold back as he spoke to the Sanhedrin, freely speaking the truth about Jesus. Months earlier, Peter had denied Christ and acted cowardly. Yet now standing before the Sanhedrin, Peter exercised courage and boldness for the Lord through the power of the Spirit. We all have moments when we deny the Lord, but the Lord graciously provides us additional opportunities to witness.

Courage is a choice and it does not always mean that we are not scared. Courage is not the absence of fear, it is allowing our faith to overcome our fears and to follow God’s will. And courage does not always occur in the “big” moments; it happens in the “little” ones as well. Sometimes it occurs when we tell a neighbor about our Lord. Or perhaps it means not gossiping with the girls or standing for truth at work.

As people question and provoke us, we must stand firm for the Lord and boldly speak truth. Standing firm means refusing to cave to the societal pressures that surround us. It means upholding the Lord’s truth when relativism has become a way of life. It means standing with our Brothers and Sisters in Christ and not hiding in the shadows, hoping the difficulty will quickly pass. Many of us may never face a religious trial such as Peter and John, but every day we have opportunities to speak courageously for our Lord in our homes, at work, to family members, to our neighbors, and to our friends. “I do not hide your

righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and salvation” (Psalm 40:10).

The Sanhedrin was clearly puzzled by the apostles for they were ordinary, unschooled men who had the power to perform miracles and courageously speak the truth. In the end, the Sanhedrin released Peter and John but commanded them to stop speaking about Jesus. The apostles then returned to their community and reported the day’s events, praising the Lord and praying together. While praying, they also asked the Lord to enable them to speak with great boldness (Acts 4:29).

At this point, let’s take a moment and reflect on their prayer. Peter and John had healed a crippled man and in doing so, ended up in prison. They had been forced to endure rigorous questioning before the Sanhedrin and were commanded to stop speaking about the Lord. And after all these events, they asked the Lord to embolden them to continue proclaiming the gospel. Amazing, isn’t it? They did not ask for the Lord to remove them from the situation or to spare them additional pain and suffering. They simply requested the Lord’s grace and strength to enable them to continue sharing the gospel.

I know it can be challenging but don’t let sharing the gospel scare you. It is simply speaking about the beauty of Christ and reality of the gospel in our lives. When Coco Cola released Coke Zero, I tried it and was instantly hooked. I loved it over Diet Coke and could not stop telling other people about it. No one had to pressure me, no one had to force me to talk about it. I just shared what I loved. That’s what we do with the gospel and Christ – we simply talk about what we love! “Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples” (Psalm 96:3).

DAY 5

Understanding the Spirit

The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

– Isaiah 11:2

In today's world, some people think of the Holy Spirit as an "it" or an impersonal force, something vague or mystical. Others imagine Him as some kind of energy, like the Force in *Star Wars*. Still others think of Him as a specter or ghost. The truth, however, is that the Holy Spirit is not an "it" but a "He." He is God, and He is utterly magnificent!

Understanding the Holy Spirit is essential for every believer and the church as a whole. Unfortunately, misconceptions and a lack of teaching on the Holy Spirit have led to confusion and error in the body of Christ. As a result, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, referred to as pneumatology, has been neglected. In some churches, teaching on the Holy Spirit has been limited to His gifts, such as speaking in tongues or healing. But there is far more to the Holy Spirit than His gifts. Thinking rightly about the Holy Spirit leads to a deeper appreciation of Him and allows us to experience Him fully in our lives.

Throughout this study, we will be exploring the Holy Spirit's role in our lives and how He strengthens, guides, leads, teaches, prays, and sanctifies, but first we must understand who He is. We will spend today focusing on the Holy Spirit's nature. This material may be more technical than normal, but do not let that intimidate you.

The Holy Spirit is God. How do the following verses reveal that He is divine? Read the verse and fill in the appropriate blanks.

Acts 5:3-4

You have not lied to men but to _____

_____ (4b)

1 Corinthians 12:4-6 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same _____ . There are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same _____ who works all things in all persons.

What are some of the attributes of the Holy Spirit? Match the verse with the corresponding attribute. The first one has been done as an example.

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| Luke 1:35 | → | Holy |
| Psalm 139:7-10 | | Omnipotent (He is all-powerful) |
| Romans 1:4 | | Omniscience (He knows all things past, present, and future) |
| Hebrews 9:14 | | Omnipresence (He is present everywhere at all times) |
| 1 Corinthians 2:10-12 | | Eternal (He has always existed and has no beginning or end) |

Challenge

In Scripture, the Holy Spirit is often associated with the Father and the Son. How do the following verses show this? Use NASB.

Matthew 28:19 _____

Having a correct understanding of the Holy Spirit is important because flawed theology can lead to frustration, discouragement, and defeat. It can make us feel as though the Christian life doesn't work. For example, some of us mistakenly believe that we can overcome our sin ourselves by striving to do better. When this does not work, we become frustrated and disheartened. We fail to realize that it is the Spirit who enables us to defeat sin and grow in holiness (we will discuss this more in Week 7). Our beliefs shape our actions and influence how we live out our faith. That is why it is vital to think rightly about the Holy Spirit.

So who is the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is God, meaning He is co-equal, co-existent, and co-eternal with the Father and the Son. He is fully divine and has all the attributes of the Father and Son. If God the Father is love, then God the Holy Spirit is also love. If God the Father is eternal, then the Holy Spirit is also eternal. Thus, the Holy Spirit is eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscience, infinite, holy, loving, good, and so forth.

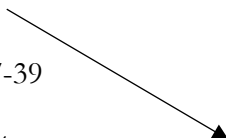
The Holy Spirit is one of the three persons of the Trinity. The Trinity defines God as one being (essence) (Deuteronomy 6:4) who eternally exists as three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit. The Father, Son, and Spirit are equal in nature and have existed eternally in perfect unity and fellowship. Each person in the Trinity is unique and distinct. Thus, God the Father is not the same person as God the Son, and God the Son is not the same person as God the Holy Spirit. Yet, there is only one God. Does this seem confusing? Our finite minds will always struggle to fully comprehend an infinite God who goes beyond human logic and everyday experience. The more time, however, that we spend reading and studying God's Word, the more we will better understand the Trinity. But it is okay if you do not fully grasp this doctrine (I'm not sure any of us truly understand every facet of it).

How do the following verses reveal that the Holy Spirit is a person and not a force? Match the verse with the description. The first one has been done as an example.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <u> B </u> 1 Corinthians 2:11 | A) He can be grieved. |
| _____ 1 Corinthians 12:11 | B) He has knowledge. |
| _____ Acts 5:3-4 | C) He has a will. |
| _____ Romans 8:27 | D) He can be lied to. |
| _____ Ephesians 4:30 | E) He has a mind. |

Challenge

In Scripture, there are several symbols associated with the Spirit. What are some of them? Match the verse with the description. The first one has been done as an example.

- | | |
|-----------------|-------|
| John 3:8 | Dove |
| John 7:37-39 | Fire |
| Acts 2:3-4 | Wind |
| Matthew 3:16-17 | Water |
- 

The Holy Spirit is referred to over 300 times in Scripture¹¹ and has several names, including Spirit of the Lord (Isaiah 11:2), Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:11), Spirit of the Lord God (Isaiah 61:1), Spirit of God (Matthew 3:16), Spirit of the living God (2 Corinthians 3:3), Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9), Spirit of holiness (Romans 1:4), eternal Spirit (Hebrews 9:14), good Spirit (Psalm 143:10), and many more. The Bible Dictionary further elaborates that “the term ‘spirit’ translates the Hebrew (ruach) and Greek (pneuma) words denoting ‘wind,’ ‘breath,’ and by

extension a life-giving element.”¹² He has been called *holy* because of His nature and because He sanctifies believers and makes them holy.

Sometimes we view the Holy Spirit as a “force” or a “power” that we call on for our purposes. But the Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force or a thing, He is a distinct person who has the following qualities:

- **He has a personality**, possessing a mind (Romans 8:27), intelligence (1 Corinthians 2:11), will (1 Corinthians 12:11, Acts 16:6-7), and emotions (Ephesians 4:30, Romans 15:30).
- **He performs actions like a person.** He searches (1 Corinthians 2:10), speaks (Revelation 2:7), teaches (John 14:25-26), prays (Romans 8:26), guides (John 16:13), and bears testimony (John 15:26).¹³
- **He can be lied to and tested.** He can also be resisted (Acts 7:51) and insulted (Hebrews 10:29).
- **He is personal.** He is our “Comforter” and “Helper” (John 14:16, John 14:26, John 15:26). An “it” or force could not provide personal comfort and encouragement. We can have a relationship with Him, just like we do with the Father and the Son.

To think of the Holy Spirit as only a “force” or “power” cheats us out of enjoying His wonderful, *personal* presence in our lives and deprives us of enjoying a personal relationship with Him.

As we end this week, remember the empowerment that the Holy Spirit provides in your life. God has never meant for you to walk this life alone. The Spirit is a constant source of guidance, comfort, and strength, helping us to grow in Christlike character. The Holy Spirit provides wisdom when we feel confused, peace in our anxious moments, and strength when we are weak. Through the Spirit, we can feel a deeper connection to God, a clearer sense of purpose, and the courage to live out our faith in everyday life!