

Adult
Sabbath School
Bible Study Guide

Jan | Feb | Mar 2017

THE
HOLY SPIRIT
AND SPIRITUALITY



SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST[®]
CHURCH

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The Holy Spirit and Spirituality

Many of us have heard the words: “And I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” And, if baptized, we surely heard them just before a minister immersed us in the water (*see Matt. 28:19*).

Baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, *and the Holy Spirit*. Yes, the Spirit is mentioned right there with the Father and the Son.

And no wonder. The Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Fundamental Belief number 5, “God the Holy Spirit,” reads: “God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in Creation, incarnation, and redemption. He is as much a person as are the Father and the Son. He inspired the writers of Scripture. He filled Christ’s life with power. He draws and convicts human beings; and those who respond He renews and transforms into the image of God. Sent by the Father and the Son to be always with His children, He extends spiritual gifts to the church, empowers it to bear witness to Christ, and in harmony with the Scriptures, leads it into all truth.”

Nevertheless, as we read the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, we see the direct activity and work of God the Father. His actions are everywhere. In the New Testament, especially the Gospels, we read again and again about the work and activity of Jesus, the Son. Jesus—His life, death, and ministry in heaven—dominates the New Testament.

In contrast to the activity of both the Father and the Son, the work of the Holy Spirit is not as openly depicted in either Testament.

But there is a reason for this contrast: the Holy Spirit does not seek to be the center of attention. He plays more of a behind-the-scenes role. The Father and the Son are more directly revealed in the Word. And that's because the Holy Spirit is there to point us, not to Himself, but to Jesus and what Jesus has done for us.

As we study the work of the Holy Spirit, we will see how central He is to our Christian experience. The Holy Spirit, God Himself, knows God as no person can; thus, He reveals God to us in a trustworthy and reliable manner. The Holy Spirit first inspired the Bible writers, and the Holy Spirit today guides us in our study of what He had inspired these writers to communicate. The Holy Spirit gives assurance of our salvation through Jesus Christ (*Rom. 8:16*), and He gives evidence of God's work in us (*1 John 3:24*). The Holy Spirit also cleanses us from sin and sanctifies us. "You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (*1 Cor. 6:11, RSV*). The Spirit produces in us lifelong growth in holiness, bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit within us—"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (*Gal. 5:22, 23, NASB*).

"The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, *and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail*. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 671, *italics supplied*.

Because of His crucial role in the lives of believers, this quarter's study will help us better understand the great gift we have in the Holy Spirit.

As we study the work of the Holy Spirit, we will see how central He is to our Christian experience. The Holy Spirit, God Himself, knows God as no person can; thus, He reveals God to us in a trustworthy and reliable manner.

At the time of this writing, Frank M. Hasel, PhD, was dean of the Theological Department at Bogenhofen Seminary in Austria, Europe, where he also was the director of the Ellen G. White Study Center. In 2009 his wife died of cancer. Since then he has learned to trust God's goodness in new ways every day and experiences the comfort, peace, and transforming power of the Holy Spirit in his life.



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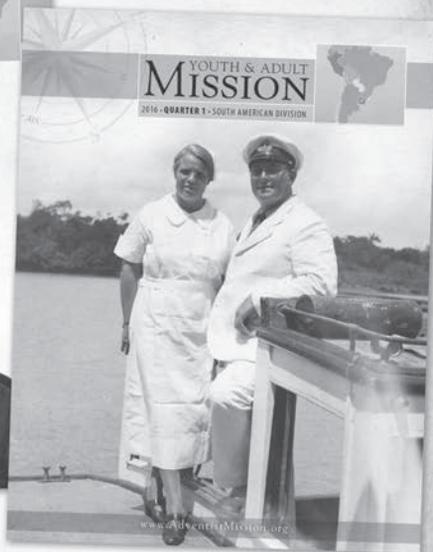
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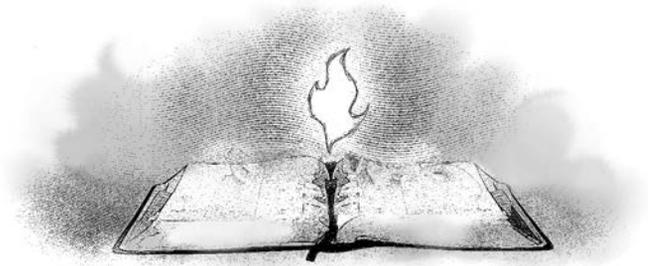
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The Spirit *and the* Word



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *2 Pet. 1:19–21, 1 Cor. 2:9–13, Ps. 119:160, John 17:17.*

Memory Text: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (*2 Timothy 3:16, 17, NKJV*).

The Bible says the following about itself: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (*2 Tim. 3:16, 17, NKJV*). Scripture fulfills this role because it is the Word of God, revealed to humanity through the work of the Holy Spirit. In the Bible the Holy Spirit reveals God’s will to us, showing us how to live a life pleasing to Him.

But the Holy Spirit was operational not only in the distant past, in the origin of the Bible. He is involved with the Word of God in many other important ways even today. And perhaps the most important is our reading the Word and desiring to understand it properly. This is when we need the Holy Spirit. This same divine Spirit awakens in us the desire to embrace the Word of God and to apply its teaching to our lives. Thus, the Spirit works with and through the Written Word to transform us into new creatures in Christ.

This week we will trace the work of the Holy Spirit as it relates to the Scriptures.

* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 7.

The Holy Spirit and Revelation

How does God ensure that His will is faithfully transmitted to fallen human beings? He does this in two major related activities of the Holy Spirit: revelation and inspiration.

In the process of revelation, human beings are dependent upon the help of Someone outside of ourselves to reveal things to us that we, as created (and fallen) beings, cannot know of ourselves. That is, the Holy Spirit teaches us truths that have to be told to us (*see, for example, Dan. 2:19–23*); otherwise, we could never know them through natural means.

Revelation is a process in which God makes Himself and His divine will known to humans. The basic idea associated with the word *revelation* is an *unveiling*, or uncovering, a disclosure of something that otherwise is hidden. We need such a revelation because, as finite and fallen beings separated from God because of sin, we are greatly limited in what we can learn on our own. We are dependent upon God to know His will. Hence, we are dependent on God’s revelation because we are not God and have only a very limited natural knowledge of Him.

Read 2 Peter 1:19–21. What does this say about the origin of the biblical prophetic message? What does the divine origin of the biblical message tell us about the authority of the Bible?

According to the apostle Peter, the prophetic message of the Old Testament was not of human origin. The prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit in such a way that the content of their message came from God. These men did not create the message themselves. They were merely the vessels of the message, not the originators. Peter was very intentional in stressing the Spirit-inspired source of the prophecies: though written by men, “prophecy never came by the will of man” (*2 Pet. 1:21, NKJV*). And it is this divine origin that gives the Bible its ultimate authority over our lives.

God used human beings to proclaim His Word to the world. How can we be used by the Holy Spirit to do something similar today, not in writing Scripture but in proclaiming what has already been written?

The Holy Spirit and Inspiration

Inspiration is the term used to describe God's influence through the work of the Holy Spirit in transmitting His message through human instruments. The work of the Holy Spirit in the process of inspiration is the reason we find a fundamental unity in all of Scripture in regard to truth. As the Spirit of Truth (*John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13*), the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth.

Read 2 Peter 1:21, Deuteronomy 18:18, Micah 3:8, and 1 Corinthians 2:9–13. What do these texts tell us about the biblical writers and about God's involvement in the origin of the Bible?

Being “carried along by the Holy Spirit” (*2 Pet. 1:21, NIV*) is a strong affirmation of the work of the Holy Spirit in inspiration. In 1 Corinthians 2:9–13, the apostle Paul credits revelation and inspiration to the Holy Spirit. To us, he says, God revealed the hidden things that no eye has seen, which he mentions in verse 9. God revealed them through the Spirit (*1 Cor. 2:10*). The apostles have received this “Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God” (*1 Cor. 2:12, NASB*). Then in verse 13 he moves to the work of inspiration, where he speaks of things “not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*” (*NASB*). Paul had no doubt about the source and the authority of what he was proclaiming.

While many parts of the Bible are a result of God's direct supernatural revelation, not everything in the Bible was revealed in that manner. Sometimes God used biblical writers in their careful personal investigation of things or in their use of other existing documents (*Josh. 10:13, Luke 1:1–3*) to reveal and communicate His message. Thus, all parts of the Bible are revealed and inspired (*2 Tim. 3:16*). This is the reason Paul states that “whatever” was written was written for our instruction, so that through “the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (*Rom. 15:4, NASB*). The God who speaks and who created human language enables chosen people to communicate in human words the inspired thoughts in a trustworthy and reliable manner.

“God has been pleased to communicate His truth to the world by human agencies, and He Himself, by His Holy Spirit, qualified men and enabled them to do His work. He guided the mind in the selection of what to speak and what to write. The treasure was entrusted to earthen vessels, yet it is, nonetheless, from Heaven.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 26.

The Holy Spirit and the Truthfulness of Scripture

While revelation is the supernatural act by which God reveals truth to chosen human beings, inspiration is the activity of the Holy Spirit that safeguards the truthfulness of what the human authors wrote, so that their words have the full approval of God. God hates false witness (*Exod. 20:16*) and cannot lie (*Heb. 6:18*). He is called a God of truth (*Ps. 31:5, Isa. 65:16*). In a similar manner, the Holy Spirit is called “the Spirit of truth” (*John 14:17*).

Read Psalm 119:160. What does this teach about anything God reveals to us?

Read John 17:17. What does Jesus say to us here about God’s Word?

The Word of God is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance. It is not our task to sit in judgment over Scripture. Scripture, rather, has the right and the authority to judge us. “For the word of God is alive 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” (*Heb. 4:12, NIV*).

Though, of course, the Bible was written by those living in specific times and places and cultures (how could it have been otherwise?), we should not use that fact to water down or dismiss the message of the Bible to us. Once that door is opened, the Bible becomes subject to humans and to their determination of what is truth. The result is that many people, while claiming to believe the Bible, reject such things as a six-day creation, a worldwide flood, the virgin birth, the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and the literal Second Coming. These are just a few of many biblical truths that fallible people, sitting in judgment on the Scriptures, have thrown out. That’s not a path any of us should ever take.

Why is it so crucial to submit our own judgment to the Word of God rather than vice versa?

The Holy Spirit as Teacher

The Holy Spirit is instrumental, not only in giving us the Written Word of God but also in helping us understand it properly. Human beings are darkened in their understanding of truth; they are, by nature, alienated from God (*Eph. 4:18*). That's why the same Spirit who revealed and inspired the Word of God is the One who enables us to understand it. The problem is not that the Bible is an obscure book. The problem is our tainted attitude toward God, who reveals Himself in the Bible.

The Holy Spirit is a Teacher who desires to lead us into a deeper understanding of Scripture and to a joyful appreciation of the Bible. He brings the truth of God's Word to our attention and gives us fresh insights into those truths so that our lives can be characterized by faithfulness and a loving obedience to God's will. This can happen, though, only if we approach the Bible with a humble and teachable heart.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:13, 14. What does the apostle Paul write about our need to interpret spiritual things spiritually?

In our understanding of the Bible, we are dependent upon the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit, the spiritual significance of the biblical words is not discerned, only its linguistic meaning. Furthermore, as sinful human beings we often are opposed to God's truth, not because we do not understand it but because we would prefer not to follow it. Without the Holy Spirit there is no affection for God's message. There is no hope, no trust, and no love in response. What the Spirit brings to life is in harmony with the truth already proclaimed in the Bible.

“Many contradictory opinions in regard to what the Bible teaches do not arise from any obscurity in the book itself, but from blindness and prejudice on the part of interpreters. Men ignore the plain statements of the Bible to follow their own perverted reason.”
—Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, January 27, 1885. How has your pride been a stumbling stone that has hindered you from implementing the truth of Scripture in your life? In what areas do your own desires keep you from accepting God's truth in your life? How can you learn to surrender everything to God?

The Holy Spirit and the Word

The Holy Spirit, who has revealed and inspired the content of the Bible to human beings, will never lead us contrary to God's Word in any way.

Read John 5:39, 46, 47 and John 7:38. What authority does Jesus refer to in these texts? How does the Bible confirm that Jesus is the Messiah?

Some people claim to have received special “revelations” and instructions from the Holy Spirit that go against the clear message of the Bible. For them the Holy Spirit has attained a higher authority than God's Word. Whenever the inspired and Written Word of God is nullified and its clear message is evaded, we walk on dangerous ground and do not follow the leading of God's Spirit. The Bible is our only spiritual safeguard. It alone is a reliable norm for all matters of faith and practice.

“Through the Scriptures the Holy Spirit speaks to the mind, and impresses truth upon the heart. Thus He exposes error, and expels it from the soul. It is by the Spirit of truth, working through the word of God, that Christ subdues His chosen people to Himself.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.

Ellen G. White has made it abundantly clear that “the Spirit was not given—nor can it ever be bestowed—to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 9.

The Holy Spirit is never given to replace the Word of God. He, rather, works in harmony with and through the Bible to draw us to Christ, thus making the Bible the only norm for authentic biblical spirituality. We can be sure that when someone comes making claims that are in contradiction to the Word of God, that person is not speaking the truth. We can't judge hearts or motives. We can, though, judge theology, and the only standard we have to judge it with is the Word of God.

What are some of the teachings that people are trying to promote in the church that are clearly contrary to the Word of God? What should our response be to (1) the people promoting these errors; (2) the errors themselves?

Further Thought: Read Ellen G. White, “The Scriptures a Safeguard,” pp. 593–602 in *The Great Controversy*. Read also Ellen G. White, “Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled,” pp. 662–680 in *The Desire of Ages*,

Think about all the truth that we know only because it has been revealed to us in the Bible. Think, for instance, about Creation. What a contrast between what the Word of God teaches about how we were created and how humanity teaches we were created—that is, through the process of what is now called “the neo-Darwinian synthesis.” Look at how wrong humans have it! Think, too, about the second coming of Jesus and the resurrection of the dead at the end of the age. These are truths that we could never learn on our own. They have to be revealed to us, and they are, in the Word of God, which was inspired by the Holy Spirit. In fact, the most important truth of all, that Jesus Christ died for our sins and that we are saved through faith in Him and His works for us, is a truth that we never could have figured out on our own. We know it only because it has been revealed to us. Think about other truths that we know only because they have been told to us through the Word of God. What should the fact that such crucial truths are found only in the Bible tell us about how central the Word of God needs to be in our lives?

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Why is the Bible a safer guide in spiritual questions than are subjective impressions? What are the consequences when we do not accept the Bible as the standard by which we test all teachings and even our spiritual experiences?
- 2 We often hear the word *truth* used in a variety of contexts. In class, talk about the concept of *truth*, not just what is true or what is not true but about what it means when we say that something is “true.” What does it mean for something to be “true”?
- 3 How should your church react if someone claims to have “new light”?
- 4 Flesh out the radical difference between how the Bible teaches we were created and what human wisdom teaches. What human wisdom teaches, that is, the latest understanding of evolutionary theory, is completely contrary to the Bible message. What should that tell us about why we must trust the Bible above everything else?

A Gift in the Forest: Part 1

Situated in Europe, Poland emerged as a nation in the tenth century A.D. During the next millennium two of Poland's neighbors, the Kingdom of Prussia (modern-day Germany) and the Russian Empire, became powerful. In 1795 these two countries divided Poland between themselves and removed it from the world map. Following World War I, Poland regained its independence.

Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union both invaded Poland during World War II. Some 6 million Poles—half of whom were Jewish—died during the war. At the close of the war, a Communist government was installed in Poland behind the Soviet iron curtain. In 1989 free elections ushered in a new government, which began the fall of Communism in Europe.

More than half of Poland is agricultural or woodlands. It's a haven for many animals, including the wisent (European bison), brown bear, gray wolf, and moose. Some 25 percent of European migratory birds breed each summer in Poland's wetlands.

The first king of Poland, Mieszko I, became a Christian in A.D. 966 and formed Poland as a sovereign Christian state. The Roman Catholic Church is still a powerful force in Poland.

During World War II, Germany and the Soviet Union outlawed the Seventh-day Adventist Church. All church properties were taken away and some members were sent to Siberia. After the war, the Adventist Church was reestablished and started to grow again.

In 1990 Ryszard Jankowski [ree-SHARD Yahn-kow-skee], the Polish Union youth leader at the time, had a dream. He wanted a youth camp where young people could be trained for service. The church had no land, no money, and no idea where they would get either. But Ryszard sensed that God was in the dream, so he began searching.

"We wanted a place where children and youth could spend time in nature and learn about God, a place where they could see the Creator and learn to love Him," Ryszard said. They wanted the camp to have electricity and water, be on a lake, and have some basic buildings.

One day, Ryszard found a place called Zatonie [zah-TOH-nee], a government-owned camp on a lake in western Poland. The buildings on the campground were in poor condition, but they could be made useful.

"I believed that God wanted us to have Zatonie," Ryszard said. The campsite was worth \$200,000, but the union didn't have money to buy the land, the buildings, or furniture. "But as our committee discussed the possibilities, the telephone rang. Someone in Denmark was offering us free furniture—they would even deliver it!" Ryszard knew that God would provide the rest if this was His will.

To be continued in next week's Inside Story.

The Holy Spirit: Working Behind *the* Scenes



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Ezek. 37:5, 9; Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13; Exod. 31:1–5; John 16:13, 14; Gal. 5:16–23.*

Memory Text: “He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you” (*John 16:14, NKJV*).

The Holy Spirit does not receive the same prominent attention in Scripture as do the Father and the Son. Nevertheless, the Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit was present at significant moments throughout sacred history. At the beginning, at God's creation of this world, He was at work, but more in the background. He was active in the inspiration of God's prophets, thus playing a key role in the writing of God's Word. He was also involved with the conception of Jesus Christ in Mary's womb.

Yet, He is not at the center of the biblical record, and we know amazingly little about Him. He remains in the background, and that's because His role is to advance the work of Someone else in the Godhead—Jesus, the Son of God—and to give glory to God the Father. All this so that fallen human beings might be saved from the eternal death that sin would otherwise bring them.

From the testimony of Scripture, we learn that the Holy Spirit willingly and gracefully accepts a supporting, helping, sustaining, and equipping behind-the-scenes role. No matter whether it is in creation or redemption or mission, He does not seek to stand in the spotlight, regardless of His crucial role.

* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 14.

The Elusiveness of the Holy Spirit

Read John 3:3–8 and Ezekiel 37:5, 9. Why is the wind a fitting picture for the mysterious workings of the Holy Spirit?

By comparing the Holy Spirit's actions to that of the wind, Jesus describes the Spirit's elusiveness. The movements of the wind have something mysterious about them. It is difficult to predict with exactness where the wind comes from and where the wind is going. Who hasn't at times been baffled by the sudden appearance of wind, seemingly out of nowhere?

Yet, we can learn to become somewhat familiar with the movements and patterns of the wind. In a similar manner, the Holy Spirit is active where He wills. No one can control Him. Yet, we can know where He is active and at work. Just like the wind, the Holy Spirit is invisible but can be most powerful. We, of course, can feel the presence of the wind and can often see its effect, even if we can't see the wind itself. From a light breeze to deadly blasts, wind can be a very powerful force. When the Holy Spirit is described as wind, His activity has been connected with the idea of bringing life to the dead. This assumes power to the highest potency, something that only God is capable of doing.

How this is accomplished remains a mystery. God and His workings through the Holy Spirit are greater than what we can fully comprehend, as are so many things both secular and sacred.

This does not mean that we cannot know what the Holy Spirit accomplishes. But we have to acknowledge that the appropriate virtue in dealing with divine mysteries is humility. Humility appreciates the grandeur of God, recognizes our creaturely limitations, and accepts our need for divine revelation.

Ellen G. White has aptly stated: "The mysteries of the Bible, so far from being an argument against it, are among the strongest evidences of its divine inspiration. If it contained no account of God but that which we could comprehend; if His greatness and majesty could be grasped by finite minds, then the Bible would not, as now, bear the unmistakable evidences of divinity."—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 170.

What are some unseen forces in nature that can impact our lives? What should this teach us about the reality of unseen yet powerful influences in our world?

The Holy Spirit at Creation

The first major work of God on this planet was its Creation. The Bible clearly mentions God (*Gen. 1:1*) and Jesus Christ (*Col. 1:16, 17*) as the Creator of heaven and earth and of all that, in fact, was made (*John 1:1–3*). Yet, the Bible also mentions the presence of the Holy Spirit in the work of Creation.

Read Genesis 1:2; Job 26:13; 33:4; Psalms 33:6; 104:29, 30. What was the role of the Holy Spirit at Creation? How is the Spirit of God related to the creation of life?

The Creation story in Genesis 1:2 mentions the presence of God's Spirit at Creation. Job 26:13; 33:4; Psalm 104:29, 30; and Psalm 33:6 support the active role of the Holy Spirit in the supernatural Creation of the earth. While the Bible clearly mentions God the Father and His divine Son, Jesus Christ, as being active in the Creation of the world (see *Isa. 64:8; Col. 1:16, 17*), the Holy Spirit is present also, though in a more subtle manner.

He does not appear as the central actor in the Creation story. Instead, He is “hovering” over the void, and through His moving He is present at the genesis of life on this earth. The Hebrew word for “moving over,” or “hovering” (*merahepeth*) over, the surface of the earth that is used in Genesis 1:2 is the same word that is used in Deuteronomy 32:11, where God is compared to an eagle hovering over its nest of young. The Holy Spirit is intimately involved in the creation of life on this earth and takes care of the newly created living beings as an eagle would do for its young. Psalm 104:30 suggests that the Creation act was possible only through the work of the Holy Spirit and that He played an active part during this process.

The Holy Spirit was not only present at the Creation of this world; He is also active in the process of our re-creation, in which He gives us a new heart and new mind. How are both of these activities related? What does the Sabbath tell us about this work of Creation and re-creation?

The Holy Spirit and the Sanctuary

“And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them” (*Exod. 25:8*).

After the act of Creation, God’s plan of salvation is of prime importance in the Bible. In a fallen world, what good would Creation be without the plan of Redemption? As sinners, we need not just a Creator but a Redeemer. How thankful we should be that we have that Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Without Him, we would be without hope in a world that, in and of itself, offers us none.

In the Old Testament it was the sanctuary and its service that illustrated God’s forgiveness of sin and foreshadowed the work of Jesus, our Redeemer. It was here that the plan of salvation was revealed to the ancient Israelites (*see Heb. 4:2*). While much of the sanctuary service pointed to Jesus and His death for the forgiveness of sin, the Holy Spirit is depicted as being actively involved by enabling specific people to build the sanctuary according to the pattern God had revealed to Moses.

Read Exodus 31:1–5. How was the Holy Spirit involved in the building of the sanctuary? How did the Holy Spirit assist those who constructed God’s dwelling place?

The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit was also present at the building of the sanctuary, the central place where reconciliation between God and human beings took place and a holy God met sinners. It was God who communicated to Moses His plan to build the earthly sanctuary according to the heavenly original (*Exod. 25:9, 40*).

The sanctuary was God’s model to illustrate His plan of salvation. God was going to dwell amid His people in a special way, and He was going to do it in the sanctuary, which He told them to build. And it was the work of the Holy Spirit to enable human beings to accomplish, with artistic skill and with beauty, what God told them to do. Without His help, Israel would not have been able to accomplish this artistic craftsmanship.

Considering the power of the Holy Spirit, He certainly didn’t need human help in building the sanctuary. Instead, He enabled other people to do it with skill and beauty. How and where can you encourage and assist other people to use their talents to further the kingdom of God to God’s glory?

The Holy Spirit in Glorifying Jesus Christ

The Holy Spirit was active during Old Testament times, though it does not appear that His work was as extensive as in the New Testament era. With the coming of Jesus, the promised Messiah, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is intensified, and He gives His gifts to all believers. While the New Testament tells us that the Holy Spirit is active in many different ways in our spiritual lives and in the life of the church, His most important work is to glorify Jesus Christ.

Read John 16:13, 14 and John 15:26. What does Jesus say is the work of the Holy Spirit? How is all other work of the Holy Spirit related to this central work?

Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit speaks not of Himself but of Jesus. His work consists in elevating the redemptive work of Jesus. He keeps Himself in the background and puts the floodlight on Jesus. It has been aptly said that “the Spirit’s message to us is never ‘Look at me; listen to me; come to me; get to know me’ but always ‘Look at *Him*, and see His glory; listen to *Him*, and hear His word; go to *Him*, and have life; get to know *Him*, and taste His gift of joy and peace.’ The Spirit, we might say, is the matchmaker, the celestial marriage broker, whose role it is to bring us and Christ together and ensure that we stay together.”—J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step With the Spirit: Finding Fullness in Our Walk With God*, revised and enlarged edition (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2005), pp. 57, 58.

This is highly significant. Any emphasis upon the work of the Holy Spirit that detracts from the Person and work of Jesus Christ is not from the Holy Spirit. As important as the Holy Spirit is for our spiritual life, He should never take the place that is due in our thinking and for our salvation only to Jesus Christ. Wherever Jesus is exalted, the Holy Spirit is at work. This is why we are called Christians; that is, followers of Christ (*compare with Acts 11:26*), rather than “Pneumians,” that is, followers of the Spirit (see Graham A. Cole, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* [Wheaton, Ill.: Crossways Books, 2007], p. 284).

Why is it so important for us to uplift the risen Lord in all that we do? After all, think about what Jesus has done for us. We owe everything to Him. How can we show our gratitude (see, for instance, 2 Thess. 1:11, 12)?

The Holy Spirit and Christ

The Holy Spirit effected the incarnation of Jesus (*Luke 1:34, 35*). He anointed Jesus for His mission (*Luke 3:21, 22*). The anointing of Jesus endowed Him with power to fulfill His Messianic mission and qualified Him to bestow the Holy Spirit on His disciples. The Holy Spirit guided and sustained Jesus in His temptations (*Mark 1:12; Matt. 4:1; Luke 4:1, 2, 14*) so that Jesus “is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted” (*Heb. 2:18, NKJV; compare with 4:15, 16*). The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus for this redemptive work (*Heb. 9:14*) and made Jesus’ resurrection possible (*1 Pet. 3:18*). In all this, the Holy Spirit remained in the background and helped to bring Jesus Christ to prominence.

Read Luke 24:44–49; Galatians 5:16–23; and Ephesians 4:23, 24. What do we learn about the work of the Holy Spirit in these passages? How does the Holy Spirit glorify Jesus?

The Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus in at least the following ways:

1. By teaching about Him in the Holy Scriptures in a trustworthy and reliable manner. Nothing that is necessary for us to know about Christ and His salvation is missing or misleading. It’s all there in the Word of God, if we would but read it in faith and submission.
2. By drawing men and women into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit gently works on people’s hearts and minds. He gives them understanding so that they understand spiritual things and so that they will be willing to place their trust in Jesus Christ and accept Him as their Leader and Redeemer.
3. By reproducing Christ’s character in us. He thus brings to life Christlike virtues in our lives (*Gal. 5:22, 23*). Through the blood of Jesus we are given victory over sin (*compare Rev. 12:11*), and the Holy Spirit enables us to walk in faithfulness to God’s commandments.
4. By enabling us to live a Christlike, selfless, and loving life of service to others. He calls men and women into specific lines of work for God and enables us to reach out to others in the attractive Spirit of Christ.

How does the work of reproducing the character of Christ in our lives bring glory to the Father?

Further Thought: No question, the work of the Holy Spirit is crucial to our walk with the Lord. Again, we might not be able to see Him work, but we can see the effect of His work in our lives and in the lives of others. If your life has been changed through faith in Jesus, it has been changed only through the work of the Holy Spirit in it. “While the wind is itself invisible, it produces effects that are seen and felt. So the work of the Spirit upon the soul will reveal itself in every act of him who has felt its saving power. When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the light of heaven.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 173. These are wonderful promises, and an untold number of lives have shown just how real they are. But the work of the Holy Spirit is not instantaneous. We don’t automatically become the kind of people we ought to be. A life of faith and submission to the Lord is a life of struggle, of surrender, and of repentance when we fail. The Holy Spirit is the Divine Agent that works in our lives to make us new creatures in Christ. This is, though, the work of a lifetime. Though our faults and weaknesses should spur us on to a greater surrender to our Lord, we must not let the devil use them to discourage us in our Christian life, which he is always eager to do. When taunted by our sins, we must always remember the death of Jesus on behalf of sinners. It’s precisely because we are what we are, sinners in need of grace, that Jesus died for us and gives us that grace.

Discussion Questions:

- ① What can the Holy Spirit’s example teach you about ministering from behind the scenes? That is, doing the work of the Lord in a manner that many people don’t know about, see, or even appreciate?
- ② How does the Holy Spirit elevate Jesus and put Him into focus? How can you elevate Jesus without putting yourself at the center of attention? Why is that sometimes so hard to do? How can we fight the natural inclination to self-promotion?

A Gift in the Forest: Part 2

The Polish Union decided to rent the camp, and soon a truck from Denmark arrived filled with military surplus beds and dressers and kitchen supplies! The union stepped out in faith and started holding camps at Zatonie.

Ryszard [ree-SHARD] went to the local village council and explained that the church wanted the campsite to train children and youth to be good citizens. He reported on how the church already had used the camp to benefit children from a coal mining region and children whose homes had been destroyed during recent flooding. He explained the purpose of Pathfinder camps and youth camps. Then he asked the council to consider giving the camp to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. One member of the local council objected, but in the end the council voted overwhelmingly to give Camp Zatonie to the Adventist Church. A gift from Adventists in Britain paid for the buildings (which were privately owned). God had spoken.

Besides summer camps for youth, the campground hosts Poland's annual camp meeting. Hundreds of people who are not Adventists come to this camp, and many leave having turned their lives over to Jesus.

Children are encouraged to bring non-Adventist friends to camp, and some of these young people have decided to follow Jesus. Literature evangelists use the camp as a training site for colporteurs, who practice their sales skills in the villages around Zatonie.

When Ryszard first found Zatonie, he noticed some words written on a building: "God doesn't exist." Two years later during a camp meeting, he asked the youth what should be done about the graffiti. A young man stood and said that he had written those words in 1989 while at a camp for troubled teenagers. When he returned home, he learned that one of his friends had become an Adventist. The friend invited him to church, and in time he, too, gave his life to Christ. God took away his desire to drink and smoke and made him into a new person. So this young man who had written the words against God on the wall during a drunken act of rebellion helped to paint over them as a brother in Christ.

In 2010, part of your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering went to renovate the buildings at Camp Zatonie. Part of this quarter's offering will fund live television productions aimed specifically at children and youth on Hope Channel Poland. Thank you for your support through the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering.

RYSZARD JANKOWSKI, now president of the West Polish Conference, was Polish Union youth director when Zatonie's story unfolded.

The Divinity of *the* Holy Spirit



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Acts 5:1–4; 1 Cor. 2:10, 11; Isa. 63:10–14; Titus 3:4–6; Rom. 8:11; 1 Pet. 1:2.*

Memory Text: “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, NASB*).

All through the Bible, the deity of God the Father is simply assumed. We find this truth expressed both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. It is one of the most crucial and foundational of the many revealed truths in the Word of God.

The deity of Jesus also is affirmed in many places in Scripture, especially, of course, in the New Testament, both in the Gospels and the Epistles.

However, the deity of the Holy Spirit is taught in more subtle terms. It can be inferred from various indirect biblical statements. Here we need to compare scripture with scripture in order to study carefully what God has revealed in His Word about the Holy Spirit. In doing so, we should not affirm less than what Scripture states, and we also should not “exceed what is written” (*1 Cor. 4:6, NASB*). This topic demands a teachable attitude of humility; we should not make our human reasoning about God the standard of how the Holy Spirit should be understood. Instead, we should accept and testify to what Scripture affirms, no matter how hard some of the concepts might be for us to grasp fully.

* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 21.

The Holy Spirit and God

The Bible does not present a systematic description of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Instead, we find interesting traces that indicate that the biblical writers considered the Holy Spirit to be equal with God. There are several biblical passages where the same activity is attributed to God and then also to the Holy Spirit.

Read Acts 5:1–4. What can we conclude about God and the Holy Spirit from Peter’s words to Ananias?

If the Holy Spirit were not God, then Peter would have been speaking here in a very careless and fatally misleading manner. The interesting aspect about the nature of the Holy Spirit, however, is the fact that the apostle Peter puts God and the Holy Spirit on the same level. In Acts 5:3, he asks Ananias why he has lied to the Holy Spirit, and he continues at the end of Acts 5:4: “ ‘You have not lied to men but to God’ ” (*NASB*). Peter clearly equates the Holy Spirit with God. His point is that Ananias was lying not just to the apostles, but to God Himself. Lying to the Holy Spirit is lying to God. The Holy Spirit is God. The point is made here very clearly.

Why such a harsh punishment for what these two people did?

We must remember that the believers of the early church in Acts were “one in heart and mind” (*Acts 4:32, NIV*). This unity was a product of the Holy Spirit, and this is the reason they voluntarily and freely shared what they possessed. To lie with regard to the sharing was to deny the unity of the community and to belie the Spirit that undergirded that unity and made it possible.

This is why the lie of Ananias and his wife falsified the divine work and presence of the Holy Spirit in the early church community. Such dishonesty toward God is destructive and hinders the Spirit of God from working effectively in the lives of believers. God wants us to serve Him undividedly. Because the new faith community was at a crucial juncture, God used drastic consequences to make sure that the new church would work in unison and truthfulness with one another and be willing to be led by His Spirit.

Think how easily Ananias and Sapphira may have justified their sin. After all, haven’t we sold our own property and given some of it to the church? What’s the big deal if we keep a little? What should this story tell us about how careful we need to be regarding how we justify our actions?

The Holy Spirit's Divine Attributes

In several biblical passages the Holy Spirit is described as having divine attributes.

What attributes and activities of the Holy Spirit are listed in the following Bible passages that, otherwise, can be attributed only to God?

1 Cor. 2:10, 11; compare with Isa. 40:13, 14 _____

Ps. 139:7 _____

Heb. 9:14; compare with 1 Tim. 6:16 _____

Luke 1:35; Rom. 15:19; compare with Ps. 104:30 _____

In his examination of the wisdom of God, Paul argues that it is the Holy Spirit who makes this wisdom known to us. “Like knows like” is the reasoning Paul employs here in his argument. Only one who is equal to God can know the deep things of God (*1 Cor. 2:10, 11*). There is no knowing God as does the Spirit, for He knows God from the inside. He knows in a way that an outsider does not. The Holy Spirit is indeed omniscient.

The presence of the Spirit is the presence of God. If I cannot flee to a place where the Spirit of God is not, He is omnipresent (*compare with Ps. 139:7*).

The Holy Spirit is said to be eternal (*Heb. 9:14*). According to the Bible, how many eternal beings are there? Only God is eternal (*1 Tim. 6:16*). If the Spirit is called eternal, then He must be God.

The Holy Spirit also is all-powerful or almighty. In Luke 1:35 the phrases “the Holy Spirit” and “the power of the most High” (*NASB*) are synonymous constructions. Here they refer to a miracle of the first magnitude, the virgin conception. In Romans 15:19, the apostle Paul acknowledges that his ministry was achieved by “mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God” (*NKJV*). Indeed, the Holy Spirit can do divine miracles.

Jesus also says that blasphemy against the Spirit is unforgivable (*Matt. 12:31, 32; Mark 3:28, 29*). This is incomprehensible unless the Spirit is divine.

But perhaps the most amazing work of the Holy Spirit is His ability to change human hearts and minds. It is the Holy Spirit who accomplishes a new spiritual birth (*John 3:5–8*). He has the power to accomplish something that only God can do.

Biblical Hints

There are various references to the Holy Spirit in the Bible that are interchangeable with references to God.

Read Isaiah 63:10–14 and compare it with Numbers 14:11 and Deuteronomy 32:12. To whom was the writer referring in these passages, and what does this tell us about the divinity of the Holy Spirit?

In Isaiah 63:10, the people rebelled and grieved the Holy Spirit. However, the parallel account, as found in Numbers 14:11, states that “the LORD said to Moses, ‘How long will this people spurn me?’” (*NASB*). And in Deuteronomy 32:12, we are told that “‘the LORD alone guided him, and there was no foreign god with him’” (*NASB*). Obviously the biblical writers saw God and the Holy Spirit on par with each other.

In 2 Samuel 23:2, we read that “‘the Spirit of the LORD spoke by me’” (*NASB*), whereas in the parallel statement in 2 Samuel 23:3, it says: “‘The God of Israel said . . . to me’” (*NASB*). Again, the conclusion from this biblical parallel is that the Holy Spirit is considered to be equal to God.

Compare 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17 with 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20, and compare 1 Corinthians 12:11 with 1 Corinthians 12:28. How are the references to the Holy Spirit and to God used interchangeably in these passages? What is attributed to God and to the Holy Spirit alike?

In 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17, Paul uses similar language as in 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20. For the apostle Paul, to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit is to be inhabited by God. By equating the expression “God’s temple” (*NIV*) with a temple “of the Holy Spirit” (*NIV*), Paul points out that the Holy Spirit is God.

In 1 Corinthians 12:11, Paul writes that it is the Holy Spirit who distributes the spiritual gifts to each believer. A few verses later in 1 Corinthians 12:28, we are told that it is God who is doing it. The basic message is clear: the Holy Spirit does the same action as God is doing, powerful evidence that the Holy Spirit is equal to God.

Read again Numbers 14:11. In what ways might this be applied to us today? Think about the miraculous ways God has worked in our church. Think about all the reasons He has given us to believe. How can we make sure we aren’t doing today what God’s people did thousands of years ago?

Divine Work of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit performs certain works, which the Bible ascribes only to God. He is active in the divine work of the Creation, and He is just as active in God's re-creation of sinners.

Read Titus 3:4–6. How does Paul describe the involvement of the Holy Spirit in the process of re-creation?

The Holy Spirit is mentioned side by side with “God our Savior” (*Titus 3:4, NASB*) in the context of the washing of regeneration (baptism) and our spiritual renewal (*Titus 3:5*). He is the agent of our new birth. He renews our hearts. He awakens our desire to follow Christ. He is the Spirit of life (*Rom. 8:2*). He is the One who sanctifies sinners and transforms our characters. He helps us to be obedient to Jesus Christ, who saved us. Only a Divine Being is capable of such wonderful things.

Compare Isaiah 6:8–10 with Acts 28:25–27. To whom do the biblical writers attribute the divine speaking?

There are several biblical passages in which, on the one hand, God is said to be speaking and in which other biblical writers state that the Holy Spirit is said to be speaking. It is the Holy Spirit who supernaturally imparted the Holy Scriptures to us (*2 Pet. 1:21*), something that elsewhere is described as God's inspiration (*2 Tim. 3:16*). Giving the Scriptures is another divine work of the Spirit.

What does Romans 8:11 teach us about the divinity of the Holy Spirit?

The Bible states that the Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead and will also raise us. Only God has the power to raise people from the dead. Hence, the Holy Spirit is God.

What are changes you can make that would cause you to be more open to the leading of the Holy Spirit? That is, what practices might be keeping you from clearly discerning His leading in your life?

The Importance of His Divinity

What would be lost if the Holy Spirit were not God? If the Holy Spirit is not fully God, the implications for salvation and worship are serious. The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit is responsible for regenerating believers. He dwells in us and fills us. He renews our thinking and changes our characters. He has the power to resurrect. He makes Christ's followers as God is: holy. If the Holy Spirit is not God, how can we be certain that He can do any of these things and do them in such a way that they are acceptable to God?

Read 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Corinthians 13:14; and Matthew 28:18, 19. **What does the fact that the Holy Spirit is mentioned side by side with God the Father, and Jesus Christ, the Son, in baptism and benedictions tell us about the place of the Holy Spirit in the adoration and worship of God?**

The divinity of the Holy Spirit helps us to relate to Him in appropriate ways that acknowledge Him for who He truly is. His divinity is the presupposition for a God-centered spirituality. The New Testament church without hesitation mentions the Holy Spirit side by side with the other two members of the Godhead. The Holy Spirit occupies the same rank and position in the act of baptism as do the Father and the Son. Baptism has a deep spiritual significance and is an ordinance of profound worship. What is true in the act of baptism is equally true of the apostolic benediction. It is an invocation of adoration where the Holy Spirit is praised just as are the Father and the Son. All three persons of the Godhead are mentioned side by side and are affirmed equally.

The Holy Spirit is affirmed as a proper object of worship in the New Testament, not just in baptism and in the apostolic benediction but also in the constant requirement that we depend on Him for all spiritual good and should obey Him as our divine teacher and sanctifier. Does it matter that the Holy Spirit is God? Yes, very much so. If we know who He truly is, and recognize and acknowledge His deity, we will honor His work and rely on Him for our own personal growth and sanctification.

Think about what it means that the Holy Spirit, God Himself, is working in your life. What great promises are found here for us in knowing that it is God who is working in us to change us into what we can be in Him? Why is this an uplifting and affirming truth?

Further Thought: Read Ellen G. White, “Misrepresentations of the Godhead,” pp. 613–617, in *Evangelism*.

As we have seen this week, the biblical evidence for the divinity of the Holy Spirit is very convincing. The Holy Spirit is God. But remember: in thinking about the Holy Spirit, we are dealing with a divine mystery. We reiterate the point: just as we cannot fully explain God and His nature, we have to resist the temptation to make our human comprehension the norm for how God should be. Truth goes far beyond human comprehension, especially when that truth deals with the nature of God Himself.

At the same time, faith in the divinity of the Holy Spirit means more than accepting the bare teaching of the Trinity. It includes reliance on and confidence in the saving work of God as it is commissioned by the Father and accomplished through the Son in the power of the Spirit. “It is not essential for us to be able to define just what the Holy Spirit is. . . . The nature of the Holy Spirit is a mystery. Men cannot explain it, because the Lord has not revealed it to them. Men having fanciful views may bring together passages of Scripture and put a human construction on them, but the acceptance of these views will not strengthen the church. Regarding such mysteries, which are too deep for human understanding, silence is golden.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 51, 52.

Discussion Questions:

- ① Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein once wrote: “What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.” Though his context was quite different from what Ellen G. White wrote above, the principle is the same. That is, why is it better to keep silent about aspects of God and of spiritual truth in general that have not been revealed by Inspiration?
- ② Sometimes it is helpful to reflect upon a theological position by asking the question: *What would be lost if the proposal were untrue?* For instance: *What would be lost if Christ were not divine?* With regard to the Holy Spirit, reflect on the following question: *What would be lost if the Holy Spirit were not fully God?*
- ③ What does the following quote say to us on a practical level? “The Holy Spirit, who is to fill us, is not some vague influence or mystic force. He is a divine Person, to be received with deep humility, veneration, and obedience. Therefore it is not a question of our having more of Him, but of His having more of us—yes, all there is of us.”—LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Coming of the Comforter*, p. 159.

Finding God's Plan: Part 1

“Roza, take a look at this,” Grandmother said as she gave Roza a colorful pamphlet. “It’s an invitation to a series of lectures about the Bible. You should go. You might learn something interesting.”

Grandmother knew that Roza, who was preparing to become a teacher, was interested in religious things. She was active in her parents’ church in Poland and even volunteered as a youth leader, though she wasn’t much older than the youth she led. Her parents were proud of her involvement with the church and of her other accomplishments.

Roza took the pamphlet from her grandmother and looked closely at the colorful pictures on the front. She read the invitation and decided to attend the lectures. She was curious about what she might learn.

Roza found a seat and settled down for the lecture. She met a young man at the lectures who was about her age. As they became acquainted, he invited her to attend a summer Bible camp that the church sponsored. Roza decided to go; she was curious about this church that seemed to know so much about the Bible.

When she arrived at the Seventh-day Adventist youth camp, Roza was a bit nervous about being among so many strangers. But the young man who had invited her introduced her to several young people from her hometown. She liked making new friends and soon found herself enjoying the fellowship at the Bible camp as much as the Bible studies.

When Roza returned home, she started attending the Adventist church every Sabbath. She knew that her parents wouldn’t be happy that she was attending a new church, so she didn’t tell them where she was going on Sabbath morning.

But soon her excitement about what she was learning spilled over, and she told her mother everything she had learned at Bible camp and church. She told her mother that smoking was not healthy and urged her to quit. Roza also explained what she had learned about having a personal relationship with Jesus. “We don’t have to confess our sins to a priest,” she told her mother. “Just tell God.”

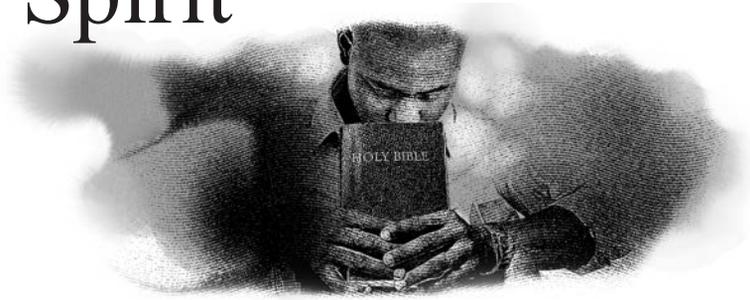
Roza’s revelation worried her mother. “Why do you want to get involved in some strange church?” she asked. “We have a perfectly good church.”

“But these people really love Jesus,” Roza explained. “They follow the Bible. I want to learn what God teaches.”

“If you insist on becoming an Adventist,” her mother said with a sigh, “don’t expect any financial support from me.”

To be continued in next week’s Inside Story.

The Personality of *the* Holy Spirit



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *John 16:13, 14; Rom. 8:14–16; Rom. 15:13; John 14:6; John 17:17; Rom. 5:5.*

Memory Text: “‘But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you’” (*John 14:26, NASB*).

Because the Holy Spirit is occasionally depicted in the Bible in impersonal terms, such as wind or fire, some have concluded that He is impersonal, a type of divine power. In their view, He is more like an electric current that empowers us rather than existing as a personal Being. But the question is not whether some passages can be brought forward that denote more impersonal operations or influences of the Holy Spirit. The question is whether there are numerous portions of Scripture that positively do establish His personality.

There are texts, and we need to take them into consideration in order to gain a more complete picture of who the Holy Spirit is.

This week we will learn more about the personality of the Holy Spirit as He is described in Scripture. This truth will help us better understand the role of God's divine Spirit in our lives. And it will help us to gain a deeper understanding of the importance of the belief in the personality of the Holy Spirit for our spiritual life. Only when we entertain right thoughts about Him can we render to Him that love, reverence, confidence, and submission that are due to Him.

* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 28.

Jesus' Description of the Holy Spirit

Read John 16:13, 14; John 15:26, 27; and John 14:17, 26. What very personal characteristics does Jesus attribute to the Holy Spirit in these passages? What does it mean to you that Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as a Helper or Comforter (*parakletos*)?

According to Jesus, the Holy Spirit *guides, speaks, hears, discloses, and glorifies* (John 16:13, 14, NASB). The Holy Spirit also *teaches and reminds us* (John 14:26). He *dwells in us* (John 14:17), He *testifies* (John 15:24, 26), and He *convicts* (John 16:8). These sound more like the actions of a sovereign personality than they do an impersonal force.

Read John 14:16–18. How would Jesus' promise be fulfilled? How are the disciples not left alone?

Jesus cares for His followers. He would not leave His disciples as orphans. He promised to send the Holy Spirit. Jesus here specifically says that He will send “another helper” or “comforter.” The words that Jesus uses here are significant. He promises to send *another* helper. Not a *different* one. The Greek word for “another” is *allos*. In the Greek language of the New Testament *allos* indicates that Christ will send another comforter who is numerically distinct but is of the same character; that is, who is similar to Himself. In other words, Jesus promises *One like Himself*, One who will take His place, One who will continue to do His work in us, and who is His representative.

This work of the Holy Spirit is the work of a helper or comforter. The Bible here uses the Greek word *parakletos* (John 14:16) to describe someone who is called upon for support, for assistance; someone called to our aid. Just as Jesus is a Person, the Holy Spirit is also personal. This idea is supported by the fact that personal attributes are often ascribed to the Holy Spirit (see John 14:26, 15:26, Acts 15:28, Rom. 8:26, 1 Cor. 12:11, 1 Tim. 4:1).

Why is it so much more *comforting* to know that the Holy Spirit is a personality instead of a mere force?

Personal Aspects of the Holy Spirit: Part 1

As you read the following texts, ask yourself if they sound as if they are talking about an impersonal force or about a divine Person. *Rom. 8:14–16, 27; 15:30; 1 Cor. 2:10; Acts 8:29; 10:19, 20; 28:25.*

Can an impersonal force intercede in our behalf? Does an impersonal spirit or power have the ability to reveal to us things about God? Does an impersonal influence have the ability to speak? All those biblical statements make much more sense if the Holy Spirit is a personal being as opposed to some impersonal force.

Read the following texts. What personal attributes are ascribed to the Holy Spirit in these passages? *Eph. 4:30; Acts 5:3, 9; 1 Cor. 12:11; Rom. 15:30.*

The distinctive characteristics of personality are knowledge (or understanding), feeling, and will. Only a personal being can be grieved. Only a personal being can be deceived and lied to. Only a personal being has the ability to choose as he wills and has his own volition. The will is perhaps one of the most distinctive elements and characteristics in any personality. And only a personal being has the capacity to love. True love is not conceivable in an abstract and impersonal manner. Love comes with a very personal touch. These predicates of personality indicate that the Holy Spirit is a self-conscious, self-knowing, self-willing, and self-determining Being, capable of love. He is not a shadowy effluence or an impersonal essence. The Holy Spirit is spoken of in these personal ways because God Himself is a personal God.

“The Holy Spirit has a personality, else He could not bear witness to our spirits and with our spirits that we are the children of God. He must also be a divine person, else He could not search out the secrets which lie hidden in the mind of God.”—Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 617.

How does the biblical perspective that the Holy Spirit has characteristics of a personality impact our relationship with Him? What would be different if the Holy Spirit were just an impersonal power as opposed to God Himself?

Personal Aspects of the Holy Spirit: Part 2

A challenge we face in understanding the Holy Spirit is that we can imagine God as a Father in a somewhat tangible way. Many also have a concrete picture of Jesus, as He is described in the Gospels. He took our human nature and appeared to us in human form.

The Holy Spirit, however, is presented in a very different manner. He is seemingly impalpable, much harder to comprehend than are the Father and the Son.

Hence, some draw the conclusion that the Holy Spirit is only an impersonal power. As we have seen so far, that idea doesn't really do justice to the nature of the Holy Spirit. In fact, there are statements in the Bible that would make no sense if the Holy Spirit were just an impersonal force or (divine) power.

Carefully read the following two passages and see if they make sense if you replace the reference to the Holy Spirit with the impersonal word *power*. Why do these texts make sense only if the Holy Spirit is, indeed, a Person?

Rom. 15:13 _____

1 Cor. 2:4 _____

The statement of the apostles that “ ‘it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us’ ” (*Acts 15:28, NASB*) would be absurd if the Holy Spirit were only a power or an impersonal influence. The statement instead indicates another personal being, much the same as both the Father and Son are personal beings.

Furthermore, how can believers be baptized “ ‘in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit’ ” (*Matt. 28:19, NASB*) if the first two who are mentioned are Persons but the third mentioned is not? That doesn't make the best sense. Instead, all three are mentioned as being part of the same one name in whom we are baptized. Thus, the Holy Spirit is revealed here to be on the same level as God the Father and God the Son.

Ellen G. White has perceptively stated that “there are three living persons of the heavenly trio . . . the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”—Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 615. She, too, is very clear about the existent personality of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of Truth

Read John 14:6 and 17:17. What is the meaning of truth in these passages?

In the Gospel of John, the word *truth* is a key term. Our contemporary understanding of truth often is very abstract and theoretical. In the Western world it has been shaped by Greek philosophy. However, in the Bible, and particularly in John's Gospel, truth carries a rather personal and specific meaning: Jesus is the truth (*John 14:6*). While God's Written Word is truthful (*compare with John 17:17, Ps. 119:142*), God's truth is revealed in a supreme way in the person of Jesus Christ. A true knowledge of God is given to us in Jesus, of whom the Scriptures speak, because God has revealed Himself through Him.

Read John 15:26 and 16:13. What function does the Holy Spirit have as the Spirit of truth?

In John 16:13 we are told that the Spirit of truth will guide us into all truth. He does this by pointing to Jesus Christ and by helping us to remember what Jesus has said (*John 15:26*) and done for us. The truth into which the Holy Spirit leads us is very personal: He lifts up Jesus and leads us into a living and faithful relationship with Him. When Jesus talked with the woman of Samaria, He said that God must be worshiped in spirit and truth (*John 4:24*). When we ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit, He will lead us to Jesus, who is the way and the truth and the life (*John 14:6*).

Truth in the Bible is no abstract thing or theory, such as often appears in philosophy. Truth encompasses a deeply personal and faithful relationship to our Creator and Redeemer, who is called "the God of all truth" (*compare with Deut. 32:4, Ps. 31:5*). Thus, the Holy Spirit is aptly called the "Spirit of truth" (*John 14:17, NASB; 16:13, NASB*), who is sent to us from God the Father (*John 15:26*), indicating not only His personal character but also His divinity.

We do tend to think of truth in terms of propositions, such as the logical concept known as *modus ponens*. "If A, then B. A, therefore B." And no question, a lot of what we understand as truth we understand as propositions. How, though, do you understand the idea of truth as a Person? Bring your answer to class on Sabbath.

Why Does It Matter?

The question of the personality of the Holy Spirit is of utmost importance, and it has highly practical implications. “If He is a divine person, and we think of Him as an impersonal influence, we are robbing a divine person of the deference, honor, and love that is His due.” —LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Coming of the Comforter* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1956), p. 40.

If we think of the Holy Spirit only as a mysterious divine power, our thoughts will be: *How can I have more of the Holy Spirit?* But if we think of the Holy Spirit as a divine Person, we will ask: *How can the Holy Spirit have more of me?* The decisive point is: Do you want to possess the Holy Spirit, or do you want the Holy Spirit to possess you? Do you resist His influence, or are you willing to follow Him in joyful obedience (*see Rom. 8:12–14, Gal. 5:18–24*)? Do you want to use the Holy Spirit according to your plans, or do you rely on Him so that He can enable you to become more like Jesus Christ and do what He has in mind for you? Do you take seriously the fact that “your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God” (*1 Cor. 6:19, NASB*), and are you willing to glorify God with how you live?

Read Romans 5:5 and Ephesians 2:18, 19. How are the Holy Spirit and God’s love connected? What impact does that have on you personally and on the church?

People consciously choose to cooperate with one another. We are invited to work together with the Holy Spirit, while He leads and transforms us personally and God’s church corporately. If we do not accept the Holy Spirit as a Person of the triune Godhead, it will be easier for us to ignore Him, to deafen our ears to His invitation, and to harden our hearts against His life-changing influence. And because we are fallen, sin-damaged beings in need of God’s transforming grace, the last thing we need to do is ignore the prompting of the Holy Spirit in our lives. If anything, we need to give more of ourselves to Him. Thus, in our acknowledgment that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person who wants to use us, God stands at the center of our Christian experience.

“We cannot use the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is to use us.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 672. What do you think Ellen G. White meant by that? How can the Holy Spirit use us? (*See Phil. 2:13.*)

Further Thought: Read Ellen G. White, “Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled,” pp. 669–672, in *The Desire of Ages*, where she speaks about the Holy Spirit. Also read “Dealing With False Science, Cults, Isms, and Secret Societies,” pp. 613–617, in *Evangelism*.

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age’ ” (*Matt. 28:18–20, NKJV*). Notice, as Jesus gave them their calling and work, He said to baptize disciples in the “name,” *singular*; of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He didn’t say “names” of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but just “name” (Greek *onoma*). This is more powerful proof of the triune nature of our One God (“ ‘Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!’ ” [Deut. 6:4, NKJV]). As this week’s lesson has already pointed out, no one questions the personality of the Father and the Son; thus, why should anyone do that with the personality and personhood of the Holy Spirit? According to the Bible, we have the loving, caring, and comforting presence of God Himself working in us and through us. That’s who the Holy Spirit is and what He does. And how much nicer it is to know that this abiding presence is a Person, just as much as the Father and Jesus are. Yes, it’s hard to fully understand. But so what? If we can’t fully understand the nature of something as basic as light or wind, how much more so will we not be able to fully understand the nature of the Holy Spirit Himself?

Discussion Questions:

- 1 In class, go over your answer to Wednesday’s question about truth being a Person, Jesus Christ. What does that mean? Why would Jesus be the Truth? How do we understand “truth” that way—instead of seeing it merely as precepts or propositions?
- 2 Ellen G. White wrote: “We need to realize that the Holy Spirit, who is as much a person as God is a person, is walking through these grounds.”—Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 616. What does this tell us about the reality and presence of the Holy Spirit?
- 3 Go back over some of the traits and characteristics of the Holy Spirit that we have seen this week. Which ones are especially comforting to you? Which one means the most to you? Share in class why you chose what you did.
- 4 What can you better relate to, an impersonal force or a personality? What are the implications of your answer?

Finding God's Plan: Part 2

Roza continued attending the Seventh-day Adventist church, and she became convinced that this was where God wanted her to be. After attending the church for several months, Roza asked to be baptized.

Her parents were angry when she told them about her decision. For the first time in her life her father hit her. And her mother demanded that she leave the house.

Roza packed a few clothes and her school textbooks and left her parents' home. She went to stay with an Adventist family who lived nearby. Two weeks later Roza's mother sent her sister to ask her to return home.

She was permitted to sleep in her own bed, but her parents no longer supported her financially. A scholarship paid her school tuition, but Roza took a job cleaning the church to pay for food and other necessities. She spent most of her time in class and studying in the school library, going home only to sleep. Roza managed to finish college on her own.

Roza knew that her mother was worried about her. "How will you ever find a husband?" she asked. Roza knew her mother had a point, because there weren't many Adventists in Poland. But she claimed God's promises to provide for her in every way.

While Roza was preparing for baptism she met Krystov [Chris-toff], a young man who lived in another city and also was planning to be baptized. The two began writing to each other, and in time they began dating. Eventually they were married.

Krystov entered the ministry, and Roza began her career as a teacher. Her family saw that the couple was happy in their faith and in their work, and they have reconciled with their daughter. Roza hopes that one day soon her parents will find the joy in Jesus that she and Krystov know.

Roza is grateful to God for leading her to the Savior through the influence of her grandmother, a Bible lecture brochure, and a Bible camp filled with friendly youth who welcomed her.

This quarter, you can help reach many more people in Poland for Jesus through your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering. Part of this quarter's offering will fund live television programs aimed specifically toward children and youth on Hope Channel Poland. Thank you for your support through the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering. Did you know that you don't have to wait until the last Sabbath of the quarter to give to this special offering? Give online now at our secure Web site: giving.adventistmission.org (choose "13th Sabbath Offering" from the pull-down fund menu). Thank you!

The Baptism *and* Filling of the Holy Spirit



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Mark 1:8, Eph. 5:18, Acts 13:52, Luke 11:8–10, Acts 5:32, Gal. 5:16–26.*

Memory Text: “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (*John 10:10, NIV*).

As Christians, we must be filled with the Holy Spirit. Without Him, our witness will be powerless and our Christian life nothing but a burden. We might have learning, talent, and eloquence, but without the Spirit, we cannot experience life as God intended for us to. We will not have the assurance of salvation and will not know the joy that comes from serving our Lord. We will be Christians in name only, and a Christian in name only is not really a Christian at all.

Jesus, however, wants us to live life to its fullest. He wants to give us life as it is meant to be, a life that is fulfilling and meaningful because it is rooted in the Source of all life: Jesus Christ. He is the Creator of all life, and the only way to eternal life. “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (*John 14:6, NKJV*). This fullness is possible only by being joined to Him, and this can happen only through the Holy Spirit's working in our lives.

This week we will study what the Bible says about the baptism of the Spirit and what it means to be filled with Him. We will also look at some evidence that testifies that we are, indeed, filled with the Spirit.

* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 4.

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Read Mark 1:8 (compare with Matt. 3:11, Luke 3:16, and John 1:33), Acts 1:5, and Acts 11:16. What other rite of initiation goes together with the baptism of the Spirit?

In the New Testament there are only seven passages that speak about being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Four of those passages go back to John the Baptist and point to Pentecost. Here the Holy Spirit was given to usher in the beginning of “the last days” of salvation history.

John, however, in contrast to the other Gospels, does not use the future tense when speaking about the baptism of the Spirit. Instead, he uses a present participle, indicating that this is something that has continuing validity (see John 1:33). The same tense is used by John just a few verses earlier in John 1:29, when he talks about another important work of Jesus: the taking away of the sins of the world. The ministry of Jesus consists in taking away our sins and in giving us the Holy Spirit. This twofold experience is also reported in Acts 2:38. After their eyes were opened to Christ, the disciples received both: forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit. The same experience is reported about the believers in the house of Cornelius in Acts 10:43, 44 and later in Acts 11:16. Water baptism is known as the baptism of repentance (*Acts 19:4*). When we repent of sin and are baptized in the name of Jesus, we also receive the Holy Spirit (*Acts 2:28–39*).

In the New Testament, the receiving of the Holy Spirit and baptism belong together. They signal our new birth. In baptism we are identified with Christ, and Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit so that we can live in His power and proclaim the good news. The baptism of the Spirit is no second work of grace at a later stage in life that some associate with miraculous gifts.

In 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul does not have in mind the unique experience at Pentecost but rather the experience of all believers. He states that by one Spirit we all are baptized into one body, and all were made to drink of one Spirit. Paul emphasizes unity. The word *all* is crucial. Paul connects the initiation of all believers into the body of Christ with the baptism of the Spirit.

What has been your own experience in being baptized by the Holy Spirit? What has He meant for your life? What would you be like without the Holy Spirit working in your life?

Being Filled With the Holy Spirit

Read Ephesians 5:18, Acts 13:52, and Romans 8:9. What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? How does being filled with the Spirit happen in our lives?

Once we are baptized and belong to Christ, we should live in the power of the Spirit. For this to happen we have to be filled with the Spirit. There are numerous references in the New Testament where people are filled with the Spirit (*Luke 1:41, 67; Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9*). The apostle Paul uses the word *filling* to say that a person has completely submitted to God and is open to the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit so that God's own work can be accomplished in the person's life.

If we yield to the influence of alcohol, our walk, talk, and thoughts will be negatively affected. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we yield every part of our life to His transforming influence with the result that our walk, talk, and thoughts will reflect Jesus.

While the Spirit is given by the hearing of faith (*Gal. 3:2*) and is received through faith (*Gal. 3:14*) at our baptism (*Titus 3:5, 6*), we need to seek the infilling of the Holy Spirit every day. We can't live off a powerful experience that we had last year or last month or even yesterday. We need the infilling of God's Spirit each day, for each day brings its own challenges.

In the Greek of Acts 13:52, the term *filled* with the Spirit is in the imperfect tense, signifying continuous action. It literally means: "being [continuously] filled." Being filled with the Spirit is not a one-time event. It is something that we should seek and receive every day. This filling has to be repeated so that every part of our lives is filled with His presence, and so we are empowered to live as we should.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit does not so much mean that we possess more of Him but that He possesses more of us. Only when we commit all aspects of our life to the Spirit every day can He use us to God's glory.

"I wish to impress upon you the fact that those who have Jesus abiding in the heart by faith, have actually received the Holy Spirit. Every individual who receives Jesus as his personal Saviour, just as surely receives the Holy Spirit to be his Counselor, Sanctifier, Guide, and Witness."—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 14, p. 71.

Conditions: Part 1

God's Word points to certain conditions needed for the Spirit to abide in us. We will look at some important ones during the next two days.

Read Acts 2:37, 38. What is the first condition for receiving the Holy Spirit?

One condition for receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit is repentance. Hearing the Word of God arouses our conscience and can lead us to an awareness of our true sinfulness and lost condition. True repentance is more than just feeling sorry for the dire consequences of our sins. It is a thorough change of heart and mind so that we see sin for what it really is: an ugly evil and rebellion against God. The only way that we can experience true repentance is to be touched by the love of God: "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" (*Rom. 2:4, NASB*).

Read Galatians 3:14 and James 1:6–8. Why can't we receive the Holy Spirit without trusting God's Word?

Jesus has promised to send the Spirit as His representative. In faith we receive the promised gift. But if we doubt God's promise and do not trust His Word, we are like a double-minded person and cannot expect to receive anything from God. Faith is more than intellectual assent. It is putting our lives on the line, trusting that God will keep His Word and not let us down, regardless of what happens.

Read Luke 11:8–10, 13. Why does persistent intercession make a difference?

God is not reluctant to give us the Spirit. God is good and benevolent, more than we can be even to our own children. Our persistent intercession does not change His mind. Our prayer changes us and brings us into God's presence. Prayer doesn't bring God down to us but brings us up to Him. Our prayers simply reveal our determination, and they prepare us for the gift.

How can we learn to be more fervent, diligent, and self-surrendering in our own prayer lives? Why is it important that we do learn these things?

Conditions: Part 2

Read Acts 5:32. Why is obedience to God’s Word an important condition for receiving the Holy Spirit?

Then, as now, the Holy Spirit is granted to all who obey God. In the Bible, love and obedience go hand in hand, and true faith is expressed in obedience. If we trust God with all our hearts, we will obey His commandments. Jesus said: “ ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word’ ” (*John 14:23, NASB*). Obedience is a choice leading to a lifestyle that follows God’s will as expressed in His law. We must continue in obedience if we want to acknowledge Jesus as our Lord (*Luke 6:46*). In 1 John 2:4, 5 we are told that “the one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected” (*NASB*). Those are strong words. From John we also know that “the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us” (*1 John 3:24, NASB*). When we do what God has commanded, we will have peace of mind.

Read Jude 18–21. Why do we need to avoid all impurity if we want to be filled with the Spirit?

The fire of the Holy Spirit cannot keep burning in our lives when we are worldly minded. The Holy Spirit reacts very sensitively to the existence of all sin and worldliness in our lives. Therefore we need to keep ourselves in the love of God and be connected with God through prayer so that we will shun all impurity and display a spirit of power, love, and discipline (*2 Tim. 1:6, 7*). Only through a close and fierce battle with self can we become the kind of people we should be. Of course, we can’t do it ourselves; the battle comes down to our choice of either surrendering our wills to the prompting of the Holy Spirit or allowing the flesh to dominate. The choice is ours.

“There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, by putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 250, 251. How can you apply these words to your own spiritual life?

Self-Centered Living Versus Christ-Centered Living

Read Galatians 5:16–26 and compare it with Ephesians 5:1–9, 17–20. List the differences between a self-centered life and a life that is filled with the Spirit.

The life of a person who does not live in the Spirit is radically different from the life and values of a person who is filled with the Spirit.

Self-Centered Person	Spirit-Controlled Person
Desires what is sinful and displeasing to God	Desires what is spiritual and pleasing to God
Is controlled by sinful passions	Is controlled by the Spirit
Misuses his/her freedom and gets enslaved in sin	Is set free from the bondage of sin and is called to freedom in Christ
Is disobedient to God's will	Is obedient to God's will
Is self-indulgent	Is self-sacrificing
Displays the fruit of sin	Displays the fruit of the Spirit
Does not recognize the need for forgiveness and is boastful of self	Recognizes the need for forgiveness and praises Jesus for what He has done

The life of a person who is filled with God's Spirit is characterized by a loving obedience to God's law and a gentle spirit of compassion for others (*see 2 Cor. 5:14, NASB*). Having been renewed in our minds and thinking and having received new hearts and a new outlook on life, our values and behavior will change. We want to live no longer in our own strength but in submission to the Holy Spirit (*Gal. 3:3*).

We cannot transform ourselves. We possess no real power to change ourselves, for sin is too deeply ingrained in us. The renewing energy must come from God. The change from within can be successful only through the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. No mere external change, such as correcting this or that bad habit, makes us Christians. The change has to come from a heart renewed by the Holy Spirit.

This is the work of a lifetime, a work that will have its up and downs, but a work that God promises to do in us if we surrender to Him, "being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (*Phil. 1:6, NKJV*).

In what areas of your life do you see the selfish, self-centered part come through, and in what parts do you see a life that reflects the working of the Holy Spirit in you? What does your answer tell you about yourself and the choices you need to make?

Further Thought: It is only natural for a person to seek control of one's life. We normally depend on our own efforts to achieve all that we can. While many people spend their lives in a quest for control, others have an unhealthy fear of losing control. This human dilemma finds an answer only in God. He wants you to give Him, Your Creator and Redeemer, full control. He knows and loves you as nobody else can. This opens the door for Him to work in your life. By choosing to submit your will to the leading of God's Holy Spirit, you will have His supernatural peace and boundless opportunities to be a blessing to others. But we need the desire for this power in our lives. God doesn't force Himself on any of us. To be moral beings, we need to be free beings. And to be truly free in Christ, we need a sense of *abandonment* (that of wanting to abandon our old sinful and fallen ways) and a sense of *abiding* (that of abiding in the power of the Holy Spirit). To be truly free, we must be truly surrendered to the control of the Holy Spirit. But there is no contradiction here. Our freedom is found in liberation from the condemnation and power of sin, which always enslaves us and always leads to death. Instead, by surrendering to the Lord and making way for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, not only are we no longer condemned (*see Rom. 8:1*), but we live a life where we "do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (*NKJV*). That's the only true freedom that we, as sinful and fallen beings, can ever know.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Some people think that freedom consists of being able to do what you want, when you want, and how you want to do it. What's wrong with that concept from a Christian perspective? What is the biblical idea of true freedom? *See Ps. 119:45, Luke 4:18, John 8:34–36, 2 Cor. 3:17, and Gal. 5:1.*
- 2 Why is it important to put self aside and consecrate our lives wholly to God before the Holy Spirit can work mightily through us? What could God do in you that would make you more of a blessing to others if you put self aside and opened your heart to the workings of the Holy Spirit in you?
- 3 "The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 172. Discuss in class the implications of these words.
- 4 Compare the evidence of a self-centered life with a life that is Spirit-filled (*see chart in Thursday's study*). Discuss with the members of your Sabbath School group what the greatest blessing of a Spirit-filled life could be for us.

“Lord, I Can’t Find You. Please Find Me”: Part 1

Hannele tore open her cousin’s letter and began reading. “I’ve given my life to Jesus,” her cousin wrote. *What does that mean?* Hannele wondered. Hannele had sometimes attended Sunday School, but she’d never heard of someone giving their life to Jesus.

Hannele longed for a similar experience with God, but wasn’t sure how to have it. She attended several different churches and joined youth activities, but she didn’t find what her cousin had described. Hannele bought a Bible and read it through; she did things that she thought Christians did, but still she felt spiritually hungry.

After finishing her university schooling, Hannele moved to Helsinki, Finland’s capital city. There she met her future husband. Hannele invited him to attend church with her, hoping that he would find God and then show her how to find Him, too. But that didn’t work.

The couple had children, and life became busy. Hannele had everything she wanted—except God. As she continued visiting churches she prayed, “Lord, I can’t find You. Please find me.”

Hannele’s teenage daughter decided to study in Australia for a year. Worried, Hannele prayed that her daughter would find a good family to live with—and she did. “They were wonderful!” Hannele said later. “Greg, the father, helped us set up our computer so we could instant message one another. As we chatted I got to know Greg and told him of my search for God. He told me that he had drifted away from his childhood church, but he suggested that I read his favorite book, *The Desire of Ages*. I found the book on the Internet and read it. It changed my life! I read it again, this time comparing it with my Bible. At last I sensed that I was finding answers to my questions and a closer walk with God.”

Greg’s father was a former missionary who answered Hannele’s questions about God. He told her that he was a Seventh-day Adventist, but she had never heard of such a group. He explained that Adventists keep the Bible Sabbath and look forward to Jesus’ return. Hannele’s husband looked the church up on the Internet, and Hannele was reassured by what she read.

Greg told Hannele about an Adventist TV station available on the Internet. She watched several programs and rejoiced to find that her life was changing for the better.

To be continued in next week’s Inside Story.

The Holy Spirit *and* Living a Holy Life



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *1 Pet. 1:14–16; Isa. 6:3; Heb. 12:14; 1 Cor. 6:11; 1 Tim. 1:8; Ps. 15:1, 2.*

Memory Text: “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (*1 Thessalonians 5:23, NASB*).

It's easy to become insensitive to the holiness of God and not to think much about God's revealed hatred of sin and evil.

Holiness, however, is a crucial theme in the Bible. The pursuit of holiness, to become loving and pure like Jesus, should be a priority for every Christian. We are rightly appalled by the “I-am-holier-than-you” attitude. But, at the same time, we can easily forget what it means to live a pure and sanctified life.

God's love and His holiness inseparably belong together. Without God's holiness, His love would be in danger of sentimentalism; without His love, God's holiness would be stern and unapproachable. Both attributes, His love and His holiness, are foundational to His nature.

The Holy Spirit is intricately connected with our pursuit of holiness. After all, His name is *Holy Spirit*, and He is called “the Spirit of holiness” (*Rom. 1:4, NASB*). His name reminds us that God is holy and that it is God's great desire to make sinners into the image of His own holiness.

This week we will take a closer look at what it means to be holy and to live a holy life.

* *Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 11.*

The Holiness of God

Read 1 Peter 1:14–16. Why is the ultimate motivation for holiness just the reality of God Himself? What motivates you to live a holy life? What does it mean that God is holy?

It's popular to emphasize God's love while ignoring His holiness. While God is love, the idea of holiness is more often connected with the name of God in the Bible than is any other attribute (*Ps. 89:18, Isa. 40:25, Jer. 51:5, Ezek. 39:7, Rev. 4:8*). Holiness describes the purity and moral perfection of His nature. God's holiness means that He is perfectly good and completely free from evil. God's holiness is the perfection of all His other attributes.

If God possessed omnipotence (infinite power), omniscience (perfect and complete knowledge), and omnipresence (everywhere present) but had not perfect holiness, He would be a power of whom we would rightly be terrified. Instead, He is a God whom we should love.

His power is holy power. His mercy is holy mercy. His wisdom is holy wisdom, and His love is holy love. In this sense holiness is the most intimately divine word of all because it has to do with the very nature of God. To deny the purity of God's holy being is, perhaps, worse than denying His existence. The latter makes Him nonexistent; the former an unlovely, even detestable god.

God's holiness means that He is separated from sin and entirely devoted to seeking the good that He represents in Himself. In other words, holiness denotes a relational quality, as well as a moral quality. It encompasses separation from sin and complete devotion to God's glory.

In Isaiah 6:3 and Revelation 4:8, God is described as "Holy, holy, holy." When the biblical writers wanted to emphasize something that was important, they repeated the word in order to draw our attention to what was said. Jesus draws our attention to important statements by repeating the words "truly, truly" (*John 5:24, 6:47, etc.*) or "Jerusalem, Jerusalem" (*Matt. 23:37*) or by calling a name like "Martha, Martha" (*Luke 10:41*). Of all His attributes, only God's holiness is mentioned three times in a row. This indicates something of highest importance. God's nature is indeed holy. He is pure and good.

How scared would you be, and rightly so, if our all-powerful God and Creator were not holy and loving? What does your answer tell you about why we should be so thankful that God is as He is?

The Nature of Holiness

“The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to His perfect nature. This is evidence that Satan’s delusions have lost their power; that the vivifying influence of the Spirit of God is arousing you.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, pp. 64, 65.

Read Ephesians 1:4, 5:25–27, and Hebrews 12:14. What is God’s purpose for all His people and for the church?

Holiness is both God’s gift and His command. Hence, we should pray for it and seek to manifest it daily. Holiness is the fruit of the Spirit displayed in our lives as we walk by the Spirit with Christ every day (*Gal. 5:16, 22, 25*). Holiness, in one word, is *Christlikeness*. It means belonging to Jesus and living as His child in loving obedience and commitment, being more and more conformed into His likeness. The basic meaning associated with the concept of holiness signifies a state of being separated, being set aside for a special service for God. On the other hand, holiness also signifies an intrinsic moral and spiritual quality; namely, that of being righteous and pure before God. Both aspects need to be kept together.

In the New Testament, believers are called holy because of their unique relationship to Jesus that sets them apart for a special purpose. Being holy does not make them ethically perfect and sinless but changes them so that they can start to live a pure and holy lifestyle (compare with 1 Corinthians 1:2, where Paul calls the Corinthians holy ones or saints, even though they are not sinless and perfect). Believers are admonished to pursue holiness, without which no one will see the Lord (*Heb. 12:14*). God’s acceptance of each believer is perfect from the beginning; yet, our growth in sanctification is a lifelong process and always needs to be extended further so that we become more and more transformed into the unblemished image of Him who has saved us.

There is a tension between being holy and yet having to pursue holiness. How will our pursuit of holiness be different if we know that we already belong to God and that we are accepted in Him because of the sacrifice of Jesus in our behalf?

The Agent of Sanctification

What do 1 Corinthians 6:11, Titus 3:5, and Hebrews 13:12 tell us about sanctification?

Our sanctification is accomplished by faith (*Heb. 11:6*) through the power of the Holy Spirit (*2 Thess. 2:13, 1 Pet. 1:2*). The apostle Paul writes: “but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God” (*1 Cor. 6:11, NASB*). Jesus produces in us lifelong growth in holiness, bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit within us. Our being changed into His likeness “comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (*2 Cor. 3:18, NIV*).

Read Galatians 5:16, 17. What does Paul tell us in these verses?

There is a battle going on in every believer. The tension we all face stems from the fact that sin dwells in us (*Rom. 7:20*). The apostle Paul knew about this battle when he declared toward the end of his life: “I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (*Phil. 3:13, 14, NASB*).

Read Hebrews 12:1, 2. What is the fight of faith that we are to wage against sin?

The battle we are called to fight is to fix “our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith” (*Heb. 12:2, NASB*). Too often we are self-centered in our religion. We focus too much on our victories and on our defeats rather than on God, who alone can give us victory over sin. When the Holy Spirit helps us to look unto Jesus, we will have no desire for sin, and everything that so easily entangles us will be put aside (*Heb. 12:1*). But when we focus on our sins and shortcomings, we look at ourselves and not to Jesus. This leads to easy defeat because, by beholding our failures, we can so easily get discouraged. However, by beholding Jesus, we will be encouraged and can live victoriously.

If someone were to ask you, “How do I get the victory over sin that is promised to me in the Bible?” what would you answer, and why? Bring your response to class on Sabbath.

The Rule of Holiness Is God's Law

We know that God calls us to keep His law. The question arises, though, why should we keep His law if we cannot be saved by it? The answer is found in the idea of holiness.

Read Romans 7:12 and 1 Timothy 1:8. What attributes does Paul use to describe the law? How does the law reflect the character of God?

The law is holy, righteous, and good. These three attributes properly designate only God Himself. Thus, the law is an expression of God's character.

To live a spirit-filled life means that we live according to the law of God. The law is the unchanging rule of His holiness. The standard that the law sets does not change any more than does God Himself. Jesus affirmed that the law is not abolished, but that every part is to be fulfilled (*Matt. 5:17–19*). To keep the law is not legalism; it is faithfulness. The law does not save us. It never can. The law is never our way to salvation. Rather, it is the path of the saved. The law, so to speak, are the shoes in which our love walks and expresses itself. This is why Jesus could say in a most remarkable manner that when “ ‘lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold’ ” (*Matt. 24:12, ESV*). Love diminishes when the law is not appreciated.

Read Romans 13:10 and Matthew 22:37–40. Why is love the fulfillment of the law?

While the rule and norm for holiness is God's law, the heart of His holiness is love. Love is the response to God's saving acts and is manifested in faithfulness. You cannot be a good disciple of Jesus without being a conscientious and loving law keeper. While it is possible to keep the letter of the law without love, it is not possible to exhibit true love without keeping the law. True love desires to be faithful. Love does not abolish the law. It fulfills it.

Why is the law an expression of God's love for us? How are love and obedience related?

Pursuing Holiness

Read Psalm 15:1, 2; Ephesians 4:22–24; and 2 Timothy 2:21. What do they tell us about holiness?

Holiness is the precondition for enjoying the happiness of fellowship with God. It is the precondition for our usefulness to God. We know the truth of the saying: “Sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character.” And, we might add, “Character is destiny.” The only thing we will take with us to heaven will be our characters.

Developing new habits and new characters, however, is not self-sanctification by self-effort. Habit forming is the ordinary way that the Spirit leads us in holiness. Habits are all important in our Christian walk, especially those habits that grow in connection with such biblical virtues as patience, love, faithfulness, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control.

When the Holy Spirit has filled our hearts, we will no doubt be active for God. But too often we forget that it is God who sanctifies us and who will finish the good work that He has begun in us (*Phil. 1:6*). Sometimes we are so busy doing all kinds of things for God that we forget to enjoy time with Him in prayer. When we are too busy to pray, we really are too busy to be Christians.

Perhaps our knowledge and success have made us so self-reliant and self-confident that we take for granted our skills and fine programs and, thus, forget that apart from Christ and without the Holy Spirit we can accomplish nothing.

Activism is not holiness. There will be people who think that they have done great works for the Lord, and yet they really were not following Him at all. “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ ” (*see Matt. 7:22, 23, NKJV*). There is a big difference between being called by God or being driven to do something for God. If we have not first taken the quiet time to hear the call of God, we stand in danger of being self-driven to do whatever we do. But there will be no strength, no power, no peace, and no lasting blessing associated with our work if it does not spring out of a divine calling. Our greatest need in our personal holiness is quality time with God when we hear His voice and receive new strength from His Word as led by the Holy Spirit. This will give our work distinct credibility and convincing power.

Further Thought: Read Ellen G. White, “Like Unto Leaven,” pp. 95–102, in *Christ’s Object Lessons*.

How do we even begin to grasp the holiness of God when our nature is fallen and corrupt and His is uncompromisingly holy? His holiness defines Him as singular and separated from the world of sin and death that we humans experience. Yet, here is the most amazing thing: God offers us the opportunity to participate in His holiness. That’s part of what a covenant relationship with Him is about. “ ‘Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: “You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy” ’ ” (*Lev. 19:2, NKJV*). Or, as the book of Hebrews says: “ ‘Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. . . . For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people’ ” (*Heb. 8:8–10, NKJV*). In these texts we can see the connection between holiness, covenant, and law. We cannot be holy apart from obeying God’s law, and we obey His law only as He Himself, the Holy Spirit, writes His law in our hearts and minds. What a sacred privilege is ours: “that we may be partakers of His holiness” (*Heb. 12:10, NKJV*), which we express by loving obedience to His law.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 In class, go over your answers to the question at the end of Tuesday’s study about what you would tell someone who asked about how to have the promises of victory over sin realized in their own lives. What would you tell them?
- 2 What does it mean to have God’s law written in our hearts and minds? Why is this different from having it written only on tablets of stone?
- 3 When you think of God’s holiness, what do you think of? Go around the class and let each person talk about what they envision God’s holiness to be like. What does Jesus reveal to us about God’s holiness?
- 4 What is the foundation for our holiness? How is holiness achieved?
- 5 Earlier in the week, Wednesday’s study stated: “The law does not save us. It never can. The law is never our way to salvation. Rather, it is the path of the saved.” How does this sentiment help us understand what the role of the law should be for sanctified Christians in whom the Holy Spirit is working?

“Lord, I Can’t Find You. Please Find Me”: Part 2

Greg invited Hannele to visit an Adventist church. She hesitated because she had been disappointed so often, but eventually she agreed to go. She didn’t expect much, but when she arrived at the church she was overwhelmed with the warmth and friendliness of the people. She was amazed to hear the deep Bible discussion. “These people knew so much about the Bible! I loved the sermon too,” Hannele later recalled. “I returned the following week.”

At first, Hannele struggled with attending church on Saturday until she understood the preciousness of the Sabbath. Several other aspects of the Adventist faith puzzled her as well, but Greg helped her to find answers to her questions, and she continued attending the church.

“I fell in love with Jesus, just as my cousin had done so many years earlier,” said Hannele. “That summer I visited the church’s Bible camp, where I studied the Bible deeply with fellow seekers and came away spiritually refreshed. During breaks I sat by the lake and prayed for my husband.”

Hannele returned home from camp rejoicing. As usual, she shared her love for God with her husband, but this time she felt compelled to urge him to make a decision for Jesus. She didn’t know it then, but that was their last conversation about religion. Two days later he died in an automobile accident.

“I couldn’t understand why God would take away my husband so soon after I had given my life to the Lord,” she said. “Now I understand that God gave me a church family to support me and pray with me during those difficult days. The Bible texts I had memorized gave me peace, and the Holy Spirit comforted me.”

Hannele went to work for the church’s Bible correspondence school, where she helps others who are struggling with some of the same issues she had. Eventually, Hannele met a good man at church, and the two married. “God has given us a ministry together,” she says.

As for Greg in Australia, he returned to the Lord as well. God surely works in mysterious ways!

In 2010 a portion of your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering provided funds to help build a bigger place of worship for an Adventist group who were meeting in a school in Nummela, Finland. Thank you for your generosity in helping your brothers and sisters around the world through the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering!

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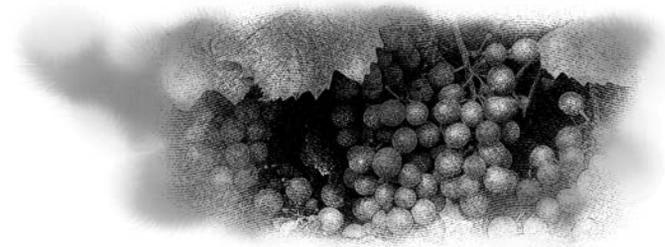
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The Holy Spirit *and* *the* Fruit of the Spirit



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *John 15:1–11, Gal. 5:22, 1 Corinthians 13, Rom. 14:17, Eph. 5:9, Matt. 5:5.*

Memory Text: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (*Galatians 5:22, 23, NASB*).

The fruit of the Spirit is the true essence of the Christian life. While the apostle Paul lists nine different aspects of this fruit, it is nevertheless one fruit and has to be seen in its entirety. The fruit of the Spirit does not tell us what a person might be able to do for God through spiritual gifts and talents. Rather, it shows how the person lives for God. It tells who the person is. All the virtues that are listed in Galatians 5:22, 23 are present in Jesus Christ. Hence, the fruit of the Spirit is the life of Jesus Christ in us, made possible through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit is not something we achieve by purely human effort. It is possible to produce and display some of the same virtues through the exercise of our willpower. But that is not the same as what the Holy Spirit does in us. What we produce ourselves is like a wax fruit compared to the real. Wax fruits are artificial. From a distance they look just as beautiful, but the taste is immeasurably inferior to the real. Real fruit is not manufactured. It grows out of a relationship. When the Holy Spirit connects us with Jesus, through His Written Word, His characteristics begin to be revealed in our own lives.

* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 18.

The Condition of Fruitfulness

Read John 15:1–11. Why can fruit come forth only out of a living relationship with Jesus, the Vine? Why is abiding in Jesus so important? How do we abide in Him?

The first secret to genuine Christian fruit bearing is to abide in Christ. Apart from Christ, we cannot produce genuine spiritual fruit. The fruit of the Spirit is not imposed upon us from outside but is the result of the life of Christ within us. In John 15:1–11, Jesus tells us that fruit bearing is the result of the life of Christ, the Vine, flowing through the branches of the believers. The growth of the fruit is God's work through Jesus Christ.

The responsibility of the believer is to abide in Christ. When Christ dwells in our thoughts, He will become visible in our actions. Jesus lives His life in us. The life Christ lived will be reproduced in us, in the sense that we will reflect His character.

The fruit of the Spirit is the character of Jesus, produced by the Holy Spirit in the followers of Christ. When Christ dwells in us, we will “walk by the Spirit, and . . . will not carry out the desire of the flesh” (*Gal. 5:16, NASB*).

In the words of Jesus: “ ‘Every good tree bears good fruit; but the rotten tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree produce good fruit’ ” (*Matt. 7:17, 18, NASB*). The good fruit is the natural product of our abiding relationship with Jesus through the Holy Spirit. When we cooperate with the Spirit's inner promptings on our hearts, the fruit of the Spirit becomes evident in our lives. Our characters will be transformed to reflect the character of Jesus Christ in what we say and do and even think. The Holy Spirit will give us power to live victoriously and to develop the virtues that are characteristic of those who are God's children.

In 2 Timothy 3:5, the apostle Paul describes people who “will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly” (*NLT*). What is the difference between a religious life and a life that is filled with the Holy Spirit? How can we know which kind of life we ourselves are living?

The Fruit of Love

Read Galatians 5:22 and 1 Corinthians 13. Why is love the first and foremost aspect of the fruit of the Spirit? How does love affect all the following aspects of this fruit?

Love appropriately leads and crowns the various characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit and permeates the whole fruit. In a sense all other qualities listed can be seen as aspects of love. Because God is love (*1 John 4:8*), the greatest Christian virtue is love (*1 Cor. 13:13*). God's love is the foundation and source of every other goodness. God's love is poured out to us within our hearts through the Holy Spirit (*Rom. 5:5*). Love is the evidence that we are God's children.

This love is far more than mere human affection. It cannot be produced by human effort. It comes as a result of abiding in Christ. Such love is generous and unmerited. It alone has the power to transform. In its tender yet strong nature, divine love leads the sinner to repentance and awakens the desire for something better. Love has the power to unite—even those who formerly were enemies (*Luke 6:27, 28; Rom. 5:8*). Thus, by our love for each other the world will know that Christians are indeed followers of Jesus Christ (*John 13:35*). This fruit of love will also lead Christians to manifest understanding and sensitivity toward others.

It is interesting that the master description of love in 1 Corinthians 13 comes right between chapters 12 and 14. Those two chapters deal with the gifts of the Spirit. Chapter 13, however, deals with love: the fruit of the Spirit. Even the superior gifts are nothing without love. The gifts of the Spirit without the fruit of the Spirit are powerless and do not produce the blessing that God intends. Love, however, is the glue that binds all other virtues of the fruit of the Spirit into a united whole and gives authenticity to everything we do.

Where does your life lack the quality of love? Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with love toward those people with whom you are dealing on a daily basis. Remember that God also loves us through other people. How can you show others love? How does love affect those other virtues mentioned in the fruit of the Spirit?

Joy, Peace, and Patience

Romans 14:17 reads: “for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (*NASB*). That is, joy is love’s reaction to the blessings of God and His great mercy and forgiveness.

Now, human joy often is focused upon earthly things and is affected by the conditions that surround us. The joy that is rooted in the fruit of the Spirit, however, focuses on God and what He has done for us. It is not motivated by surrounding conditions. As God’s people, we are to be joyful. This does not mean that we have to smile all the time, even though a friendly smile expresses much. But our trust in God will give us abundant reasons to rejoice with unspeakable joy over what He has done for us and in us. Spiritual joy is the result of active faith.

Read John 14:27 along with Romans 14:17. How is peace related to the work of the Holy Spirit?

Peace is more lasting than joy. Peace comes as a result of being justified by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (*Rom. 5:1*). When we are at peace with God, the Holy Spirit will lead us to be peaceful and patient toward others. Because the God of peace will be with us (*Phil. 4:9*) through the Holy Spirit, we will not be quarrelsome and vengeful toward others. Instead, we will seek to live as peaceably as possible with everyone (*Rom. 12:18*).

Read 2 Peter 3:9. How does patience reflect the character of God?

Patience is not a prevalent characteristic of human beings. It means putting up with others or with circumstances, even when things do not run smoothly. Yet, even in trials, we are not alone. God sustains us through His Holy Spirit and builds patience, which is a characteristic mark of the believers in the end time (*Rev. 14:12*). Only those who aim at a worthy goal can be patient.

Joy, peace, and patience. How much of this fruit do you experience in your life? In which of these areas do you need more work done in you?

Kindness, Goodness, and Faithfulness

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4. Why does genuine kindness have such positive appeal to other people? Where do you see God’s kindness in His dealings with humanity?

“Kindness” is the word frequently used in describing God’s dealings with His people. Kindness also describes our dealings with others in their failures. God could be quite harsh in dealing with our faults. Yet, He treats us as a loving father would treat a learning child (*Hos. 11:1–4*). Perhaps nothing discredits our Christian testimony and ministry more frequently than unkindness. It does not cost money to be kind, but it can open the door to the heart of the other person. No matter how firm we must be in reproof, we need not become unkind in our dealings with others, whatever their faults and issues. To reprove in kindness is perhaps the greatest sign of nobility of character.

Read Ephesians 5:9. What accompanies goodness in this passage?

Goodness is love in action. The goodness that grows as the fruit of the Spirit also includes works and acts of goodness. It is goodness shown to others in practical works of love. When the Holy Spirit lives in us, there will be a positive outflow of goodness to the people with whom we come in contact.

Read Galatians 5:22. Why is it important to be trustworthy and faithful in our Christian walk with God?

What is in view here is the faithfulness of character and conduct brought forth through the Holy Spirit. Faithfulness means trustworthiness or being reliable. Those who are faithful do what they promise to do. Faithfulness is also a characteristic of Jesus Christ, who is called “the faithful witness” (*Rev. 1:5, NASB*), and of God the Father, who keeps His promises and is faithful in what He does (*1 Cor. 1:9, 10:13, 1 Thess. 5:24, 2 Thess. 3:3*). In our faithfulness, we reflect the image of God in our lives. “It is not the great results we attain, but the motives from which we act, that weigh with God. He prizes goodness and faithfulness more than the greatness of the work accomplished.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 510, 511.

Gentleness and Self-Control

Read Galatians 5:23 and Matthew 5:5. Why is meekness, or gentleness, so important for Christlike leadership?

Gentleness, or meekness, does not mean weakness. It is not cowardice or lack of leadership. On the contrary, Moses was called the meekest man on earth (*Num. 12:3*); yet, he was a powerful leader of God's people. Meek people are not boisterous, quarrelsome, or selfishly aggressive. Instead, they serve in a gentle spirit. Meekness can be the outward expression of an inward faith and confidence, not in oneself, of course, but in the power of God, which works within us. Oftentimes, those who are loud, boisterous, and assertive are covering up insecurities and fears.

Read Galatians 5:23 and Proverbs 16:32. What misery comes when we do not exercise self-control? What blessings do we gain if we are self-controlled and temperate in our lives?

The last aspect of the fruit of the Spirit is temperance or self-control. Here is where we all need to be careful, for who doesn't struggle, in one area or another, with self-mastery? Before one can rule a city, a community, or a church, one has to be able to control his or her own spirit. True temperance is control, not only over food and drink but over every phase of life.

All the above-mentioned aspects are part of the one fruit of the Spirit. When the Bible describes God's work in our lives, the ethical aspects of holiness have priority over the charismatic gifts. Christlikeness in all its facets is what really matters in the life of the believer. Because the fruit of the Spirit is the common distinguishing mark of all believers everywhere, it produces a visible unity in His church.

Think about areas of your life in which you should be more self-controlled. Perhaps you are in one area but not so much in another. Why is it important to have, through the power of God, control over all areas? Bring your answer to class on Sabbath.

Further Thought: “In modern language the passage in Galatians 5:22, 23 could read something like this: ‘The Fruit of the Spirit is an affectionate, lovable disposition, a radiant spirit and a cheerful temper, a tranquil mind and a quiet manner, a forbearing patience in provoking circumstances and with trying people, a sympathetic insight and tactful helpfulness, generous judgment and a big-souled charity, loyalty and reliability under all circumstances, humility that forgets self in the joy of others, in all things self-mastered and self-controlled, which is the final mark of perfecting. This is the kind of character that is the Fruit of the Spirit. Everything is in the word Fruit. It is not by striving, but by abiding; not by worrying, but by trusting; not of works, but of faith.’ ” —S. Chadwick, in Arthur Walkington Pink, *The Holy Spirit* (Bellingham, Wash.: Logos Bible Software, n.d.), chapter 30.

“If the love of the truth is in your heart, you will talk of the truth. You will talk of the blessed hope that you have in Jesus. If you have love in your heart, you will seek to establish and build up your brother in the most holy faith. If a word is dropped that is detrimental to the character of your friend or brother, do not encourage this evil-speaking. It is the work of the enemy. Kindly remind the speaker that the Word of God forbids that kind of conversation.”—Ellen G. White, *Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 76.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 In class, talk about the final question at the end of Thursday’s study regarding the need for self-control. Why, if we are saved by grace, is victory over sin so important? After all, isn’t the gospel about forgiveness of sin? At the same time, think of the character of Judas and what the sin of covetousness did to him. What can we learn from his example about the answer to the question about the need for victory? Also, how does what Ellen G. White says here help shed light on the question of the need for victory? “One wrong trait of character, one sinful desire cherished, will eventually neutralize all the power of the gospel.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 53.
- 2 Why is the fruit of the Spirit more important than any gifts of the Spirit?
- 3 Read aloud 1 Corinthians 13 in class and talk about what it means. Why does Paul put such a big emphasis on the need for love? How can we learn to love the way that Paul talks about showing love here? Why is death to self and abiding in Christ so crucial, especially in loving those whom we truly dislike?

A Place to Belong

Leila awoke with a heavy heart. It was Sabbath, and she was homesick. She remembered her mother and brother, who would be going to church today.

In Kenya it seemed that nearly everyone went to church. But in Denmark, where Leila now lived, it seemed that few people attended the fine churches scattered across the city. In fact, she had been so busy in the two months since she had arrived that she hadn't thought much about finding a church either.

Leila had come to Copenhagen to visit her aunt. When the woman suggested that Leila find work as an au pair (a live-in babysitter), Leila agreed. She obtained the necessary visa and found a job with a wonderful family who treated her well. She began saving money to attend college when she returned home. But she hadn't found a church home.

Suddenly, she turned on the computer and searched for a Seventh-day Adventist church in Copenhagen. She was thrilled to discover an international Adventist congregation that worshiped in the city. Quickly she copied down the address. But how could she get there? Her aunt wasn't an Adventist, so Leila decided to take the bus. She found a map and hurried to catch the bus.

Arriving at the place where the Adventists normally met, Leila was dismayed to find the room empty! Then she noticed a letter explaining that the members were on a retreat. The letter gave directions, so Leila hurried to catch a bus to the region outside the city where the retreat was being held.

She got lost several times before she found the retreat center, and arrived just as the sermon was ending. But Leila didn't care. She had found fellow believers!

She met Rose from Uganda, who invited her to join her for lunch. Rose introduced Leila to other members of the English-speaking church. She met people from around the world—Iceland, Philippines, Tanzania, and America, as well as from Denmark. The members welcomed her warmly and invited her to join them the next Sabbath, and Leila was determined not to miss another Sabbath of fellowship and worship!

Leila rejoices that she has found her spiritual home in Denmark in the international congregation. She feels loved and nurtured there and in turn welcomes and nurtures others who come.

The international English-language church in Copenhagen represents Adventists from at least 16 countries, yet they find unity and fellowship in their adopted country and their new church home. A portion of your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering in 2010 helped to provide funds for a new place of worship for this international Adventist congregation. Thank you!

The Holy Spirit *and* the Gifts of the Spirit



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *1 Cor. 12:4–7, 11; Eph. 4:7; 1 Cor. 12:14–31; Rom. 12:3–8; 1 John 4:1–3.*

Memory Text: “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all” (*1 Corinthians 12:4–6, NKJV*).

Going away on a long business trip, a man left his son in charge of the household, with a specific task to do. But the son soon realized that his father had not provided him with the necessary means and tools to accomplish that task. Frustrated, the son had to leave it undone.

Likewise, when Jesus left His disciples and went to be with His Father in heaven, He gave them a specific task: preach the good news of the gospel to the world. But Jesus did not leave His disciples unequipped. What He commanded them to do He enabled them to do, but in His name and through the power and help of the Holy Spirit. In *1 Corinthians 1:4–7* Paul gives thanks “for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that in everything you were enriched in Him . . . so that you are not lacking in any gift” (*NASB*). Spiritual gifts are given through the Holy Spirit in Christ to build His church.

This week we will study the Holy Spirit as the Sovereign Giver of God’s remarkable gifts and look at the difference between the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit.

* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 25.

The Fruit of the Spirit and the Gifts of the Spirit

The fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit have the same Author. Yet, they are not the same. No one is required to manifest a gift of the Spirit, but everyone should manifest the fruit of the Spirit. Spiritual gifts do not necessarily testify to spirituality, but the fruit of the Spirit does. While there is only one fruit, there are many gifts, and some are greater than others.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4–7, 11. What is the essence of what Paul is teaching here?

While all aspects of the fruit of the Spirit are designed by God to be visible in the life of His followers, not every believer has the same gift or gifts. There is no command that all should have one particular gift, such as speaking in tongues. Instead, God sovereignly equips His believers with different gifts as He sees fit. The gifts of the Spirit are given so that we can serve others and build up the body of Christ, His church. These gifts are not given for our own pleasure and glory. They are bestowed to further the cause of God.

Therefore, spiritual gifts are worthless without the fruit of the Spirit. It is interesting that within the context of the spiritual gifts, love is often alluded to. Immediately after 1 Corinthians 12 comes the supreme description of love, in chapter 13. Ephesians 4:11–13 is followed in verses 15 and 16 with references to love. The next verses after Romans 12:3–8, where the gifts of the Spirit are mentioned, speak about love (*see Rom. 12:9, 10*).

The gifts are, after all, gifts of grace; that is, they are gifts of love. They are given out of love and serve the love of God in reaching other people. By loving others, we are revealing the love of God to them. A loving and omniscient God provides the means to accomplish what He has commissioned His people to do. Perhaps that is why love is the greatest gift of all (*1 Cor. 13:13*).

Why is love so central to all that we do as Christians? How does love, in a sense, “empower” our witness?

God, the Sovereign Giver of the Spiritual Gifts

It is not we who decide what gifts to have. The Greek word for the gifts of the Spirit is *charismata*—they are gifts of grace, distributed and given by God Himself. We do not earn them by our status, our position, our honor, our education, or our spiritual performance. They are gifts, freely given out of love so that we can fulfill the task God has assigned us to do.

Read Ephesians 4:7. We often think that the Holy Spirit is the One who bestows spiritual gifts. The apostle Paul also connects Jesus Christ with the giving of the gifts. How is Jesus involved in the giving of the gifts?

Paul says that the grace of Christ secured the right to give us gifts. But it is the Holy Spirit who distributes them to the members of the church. Those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and believe in Him will be equipped by the Holy Spirit with spiritual gifts “as He wills” (*1 Cor. 12:11, NASB*). The bestowal of the gifts is God’s sovereign decision.

Innate ability as such is not a spiritual gift. Spiritual gifts are not the same as natural talents that a person might have developed through intense education. Many non-Christians are blessed with such providential talents. While every good thing and perfect gift is ultimately from God (*James 1:17*), God has decided to equip His believers with special gifts in order to bless the lives of other Christians and to build up His church. God also can use a natural talent for that purpose when the person acknowledges that even such a talent ultimately comes from God and then prayerfully and submissively dedicates that talent to the Lord’s work.

What does Paul tell his readers in 1 Corinthians 12:14–31 about the distribution of the gifts? Why is this perspective so important for understanding how spiritual gifts function in the church?

The Holy Spirit is the one who distributes the gifts according to His wisdom and will. Since He loves us and knows best how we can serve Him most efficiently, we do not need to be envious of others and their gifts. To envy other gifts is a sign of ingratitude toward God and of doubting His wisdom in distributing His gifts.

What gifts has God granted to members of your church? What message can you take away from the fact that different people have different gifts?

The Purpose of the Spiritual Gifts

Read Romans 12:3–8 and Ephesians 4:8–12. What is the purpose of the spiritual gifts that God gives us?

The spiritual gifts were clearly given for service, not for our sanctification. They are not miraculous tricks that satisfy our curiosity, nor are they given as an antidote to boredom. Often we think about the gifts of the Holy Spirit in terms of fulfilling our spiritual needs or as empowering us in our walk with God. The result is a view of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that is more Christian-centered than Christ-centered. It is more focused on us than on God. When we try to recover a God-centered perspective of the spiritual gifts, we realize that the gifts God gives fulfill multiple divine purposes: they are given to further the unity of the church and for building up the church (*Eph. 4:12–16*). They are given to carry on the divinely commissioned ministry of the church (*Eph. 4:11, 12*). And ultimately they are given to glorify God (*1 Pet. 4:10, 11*).

This is the reason why the gifts are never given to please us. They are to edify others (*1 Pet. 4:10; 1 Cor. 14:12, 26*). They are given to bring spiritual profit and edification to the whole church. It is a tragedy when God's gifts, which are supposed to foster unity in the church, are misused so that only certain individuals are elevated. When this happens, individuals receive undue prominence. This in turn fosters disunity and gives way to divisiveness.

Too often we think about spiritual gifts only in terms of ability and talents that we receive. While talents are involved in spiritual gifts, we should keep in mind that in bestowing a spiritual gift the Holy Spirit also always gives a specific task or ministry that goes along with it (*1 Pet. 4:10*). Thus, we might say that spiritual gifts are certain capacities given supernaturally by God through the Holy Spirit. These gifts fit the person for a special type of service that will build up the church. To reach that goal, diverse gifts are needed.

Why do you think a primary purpose of the gifts is church unity? How can believers with different gifts aim at unity in the church? What needs to take place so that different gifts in the church become a blessing rather than a source of division?

The Gift, Then and Now

Read 1 Corinthians 14:1 and compare the different lists in 1 Corinthians 12:7–11, 27–31; Romans 12:3–8; and Ephesians 4:11, 12. Were those gifts given only to the New Testament believers? Why are the gifts available today?

There are some Christians who think that the spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament were restricted to the times of Jesus and the apostles. They argue that, with the death of the first apostles, the special spiritual gifts also have ceased to be present in the church. In support of such a view, they quote 1 Corinthians 13:10, where the apostle Paul states that “when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away” (*NASB*). Yes, there will be a time when the gifts will cease. But they will cease only when the perfect has come; that is, when we no longer see as through a dark glass, but face to face, when Jesus comes again. The Bible tells us that the spiritual gifts are given to build up the church (*1 Cor. 12:28*). Paul admonishes the believers to “desire earnestly spiritual gifts” (*1 Cor. 14:1, NASB*). They are necessary to the well-being of the body. In the absence of any scriptural proof that God has abolished them, we have to assume that He intends them to remain until the church has completed its mission, and Christ has come again.

The work of God will be completed at the end of time with power and strength far exceeding the first beginnings. As long as the church is called to prepare the world for Christ’s second coming, God will not leave the members of the church without help in fulfilling their mission. But these gifts will never supersede the Bible, nor occupy the same place as the Bible. Rather, they are a fulfillment of the biblical promise to equip the believers so that they can build up the body of Christ and prepare the world for the soon coming of Jesus.

Read Ephesians 4:11–13, especially verse 13, which says: “till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (*NKJV*). What does this tell us about the present need for the gifts in the church?

The Holy Spirit and the Gift of Discernment

Read 1 Corinthians 12:10, 14:29, and 1 John 4:1–3. Why is the gift of discernment important?

While there are genuine spiritual gifts present in the church, the Bible also warns us not to believe every spirit but rather to test the spirits by their conformity to Scripture, their consistency, and whether they exalt Jesus as the Lord. It is necessary to “distinguish between spirits” (*1 Cor. 12:10, ESV*) because not everything that pretends to come from God is really from God. We are warned that there are demonic powers seeking to mislead the church and that there are devilish reproductions of the genuine gifts of the Spirit, such as false teachings, false prophecy, lying visions, counterfeit tongue-speaking, occult healing powers, misleading signs and wonders, et cetera.

Some who accept the validity of the spiritual gifts even today, however, have placed a special emphasis on *some* spiritual gifts and have given unwarranted prominence to the presence of special signs and wonders. It is interesting that Paul lists the gift of discernment immediately after he mentioned the gift of “effecting of miracles” and the gift of “prophecy” and before he mentions the gift of tongues (*1 Cor. 12:10, NASB*).

In order to preserve the church in truth and unity and to safeguard the members from following false prophets and being deluded by false signs and miracles, God gives the church the gift of discernment. Biblical maturity, knowledge, and faithfulness to God’s Word in belief and practice are needed to make proper evaluations. The basis for all discernment, however, has to be the Word of God. Only through testing everything by the Word can we know for sure whether what we are hearing or seeing is truly from the Lord or, instead, from somewhere else.

“The man who makes the working of miracles the test of his faith will find that Satan can, through a species of deceptions, perform wonders that will appear to be genuine miracles. . . . Let not the days pass by and precious opportunities be lost of seeking the Lord with all the heart and mind and soul. If we accept not the truth in the love of it, we may be among the number who will see the miracles wrought by Satan in these last days, and believe them. Many strange things will appear as wonderful miracles, which should be regarded as deceptions manufactured by the father of lies. . . . Men under the influence of evil spirits will work miracles.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 2, pp. 52, 53.

Further Thought: Read Ellen G. White, “Agency of Evil Spirits;” pp. 511–517; “The Scriptures a Safeguard,” pp. 593–602, in *The Great Controversy*.

Some have asked, “Why don’t we see the same kind of miracles, such as the miraculous healings, today that were seen in Bible times?” First, we do hear stories about miracles. And surely some people have seen them firsthand, too. Second, when reading the Bible, we can get the impression that miracles were always happening. But we get that impression only because the Holy Spirit inspired the authors to write about events that were crucial in establishing the early church, and these events often included miracles. We could imagine that in most cases, and most of the time, things back then were the way they are today: people being taught the Word of God and then responding to the Holy Spirit. And, finally, Ellen G. White wrote: “The way in which Christ worked was to preach the Word, and to relieve suffering by miraculous works of healing. But I am instructed that we cannot now work in this way, for Satan will exercise his power by working miracles. God’s servants today could not work by means of miracles, because spurious works of healing, claiming to be divine, will be wrought. For this reason the Lord has marked out a way in which His people are to carry forward a work of physical healing, combined with the teaching of the Word. Sanitariums are to be established, and with these institutions are to be connected workers who will carry forward genuine medical missionary work. Thus a guarding influence is thrown around those who come to the sanitariums for treatment.”—*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 54.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 What is the difference between the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit?
- 2 How can the understanding that the gifts are given by a loving and wise God help us to appreciate the various gifts in our church?
- 3 Why are miraculous healings and wonders in themselves not a safe guide for determining truth? What do we need along with them?
- 4 “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith” (*Rom. 12:3, NKJV*). What crucial admonition is given to us here? How “highly” should we think of ourselves?

The Newspaper Ad: Part 1

Kim leafed through the newspaper, scanning the headlines and reading the stories that caught his interest. His eyes fell on a small advertisement in the lower corner of the page. He read it absently, then stopped and read it again. He turned the page and continued reading, but his mind returned to that small advertisement. The few sentences in the advertisement invited readers to join a Bible study that was meeting on Tuesday evenings.

Kim flipped back through the newspaper, drawn to the ad as a moth is drawn to a flame. He read the ad again, sensing that it offered something that he needed, that he had been searching for.

Kim had always been interested in spiritual things. Although his family, like most in Denmark, wasn't religious, Kim always believed in good, if not in God. Kim sensed that life was filled with struggles between good and evil. He had seen evil in the alcohol and drugs and violence that he'd encountered, and he reasoned that if evil existed, then somewhere good must exist as well.

He tried to live a good life, but his failures frustrated him. He searched for ways to embrace goodness without realizing that the good he was looking for was God.

In his search for goodness, Kim adopted a healthy lifestyle and became a vegetarian. He shared what he was learning with his family, but he was careful not to overwhelm them with too much information. Over the course of time his parents saw the wisdom in his healthy lifestyle.

As he read books on health, he was introduced to the New Age movement. New Age teachings don't deny God; instead they teach that God exists within every person as a force for good. But salvation through Jesus Christ isn't a part of New Age.

When Kim faced some personal problems, he realized that the New Age movement didn't hold all the answers. There had to be something more to life that he hadn't yet discovered. He began to question God. Was He real? Did He care about humanity? Could He love a person and help him or her in times of trouble? If God cared about him, Kim wanted to meet Him.

To be continued in next week's Inside Story.

The Holy Spirit *and the* Church



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Eph. 1:22, 23; 1 Cor. 12:13; Rom. 6:3–7; Acts 17:11; Eph. 4:5, 6; Acts 2:4–11.*

Memory Text: “Being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (*Ephesians 4:3–5, NASB*).

Sometimes we think of the Holy Spirit at work only on the individual level in the lives of individual believers. But this work in individuals is the foundation of a spiritual community. The Holy Spirit is ultimately responsible for the existence of the church of Christ.

We are often tempted to think that the church exists and grows because of our various evangelistic and missionary activities. Yes, God wants to achieve His glorious plans for the church, and to do so with our help. But the real reason for the church lies not in what we do; nor is it the result of our efficient organization and effective administration, however important these are. The church exists because of what God has already done and continues to do for us through the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who creates a spiritual community and fellowship that has the Written Word of God, inspired by the same Spirit, as its authority for faith and practice. The Spirit-inspired Bible is the foundation for the theological unity of the church. Without the work of the Spirit, the church would not exist and could not continue to fulfill its united mission.

* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 4.

The Holy Spirit Unites Us With Christ

The Holy Spirit unites us in manifold ways. We would not exist as a church if the Holy Spirit did not first unite us with Christ. Christ is the head of the church (*see Eph. 1:22, 23; 5:23*). Through the Holy Spirit, we are effectually united to Christ Himself. Being united with Christ is the foundation of all the blessings of salvation, because all we have in the Lord comes from Him. Our adoption as sons and daughters of Christ, our justification as well as our sanctification, our living a victorious life over sin, and our final glorification are all received through our union with Christ. Thus, He must be the foundation to our entire Christian experience.

Read Ephesians 2:18, 20–22, and 1 Peter 2:6, 7. What do they tell us about the role of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the creation of the church?

Through the Spirit, we have access to God the Father. Jesus is the Rock, the foundation of our salvation, and the One on whom all other parts of the whole building are erected.

The work of the Spirit on the individual level then leads to a specific community of faith: the church. When we have experienced salvation through faith in Christ Jesus alone, and have been touched by the love of God, there is a sweet “fellowship of the Holy Spirit” (*2 Cor. 13:14, NASB*) in the church. Individual believers are being built into a new spiritual house of God “in the Spirit” (*Eph. 2:22, NASB*). As followers of Christ we should be eager “to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (*Eph. 4:3, NASB*). In every way possible, without compromising what cannot be compromised, we need to seek for unity in the fellowship of believers.

Read Colossians 3:12–14. How can you exemplify these attributes and contribute to unity in the church? Why are these attributes so crucial to the unity of the church?

The Holy Spirit Unites Us Through Baptism

Read 1 Corinthians 12:13. How does baptism unite us with Christ and with the Spirit?

It is the Holy Spirit who unites us into one body of believers. The public entrance into Christ's spiritual kingdom is through baptism. We are baptized into a specific church body. Thus, baptism has a distinct communal dimension and important communal implications. As followers of Christ, we cannot live by ourselves. We all need the support, encouragement, and help of others. And we certainly cannot fulfill the divine mission alone. That is why God has created the church. To follow Christ means following Him in the fellowship of other believers. Thus, baptism and the church have a visible component to them.

Read Romans 6:3–7. What is symbolized through biblical baptism?

The act of being buried with Jesus Christ through baptism into death in the watery grave and being raised to new life in fellowship with Jesus, our Lord and Savior, represents the crucifixion of the old life and the public confession of accepting Christ as our Savior.

“Baptism is a most solemn renunciation of the world. Self is by profession dead to a life of sin. The waters cover the candidate, and in the presence of the whole heavenly universe the mutual pledge is made. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, man is laid in his watery grave, buried with Christ in baptism, and raised from the water to live the new life of loyalty to God.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1074.

Baptism is a positive step with which all who wish to be acknowledged as under the authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit must comply. In other words, baptism marks true repentance, the crucifixion of the old life, and it signals the new birth or conversion. It also encompasses mutual covenant obligations. The believer promises to be faithful to God and His commandments, and God guarantees that we can depend on His help whenever we need it.

Have you made a decision for believers' baptism? If not, what hinders you from following Christ in baptism? If you have been baptized by immersion, how has your baptismal covenant impacted your spiritual walk with Jesus?

The Holy Spirit Unites the Church Through the Word of God

Read Acts 17:11 and John 5:39, 46, 47; 8:31, 32. What is a distinguishing mark of a true disciple of Christ? Why is the Bible so indispensable in pointing us to Christ and in helping us to follow Him faithfully?

The primary means by which the Holy Spirit unites us with Christ is through the Written Word of God. The Bible is a trustworthy source for knowing Jesus and the will of God. That is why reading Scripture and memorizing its content is so important. The Bible is the authoritative source for discerning spiritual truth and error. Paul commended the Bereans as noble-minded (*Acts 17:11*) because they diligently studied and searched the Scriptures in order to find out if what they heard was true.

Any reformation and spiritual revival—no matter whether it affects us individually or as a church corporately—must be based on Scripture. The Bible is the foundation on which our faith is built; meanwhile, the love of Jesus and for His Written Word is the bond that keeps us together.

Read John 17:17–21. Here Jesus speaks about unity as a distinguishing mark of Christian discipleship. According to John 17:17, what is the basis for this unity?

The Word of God is truth (*John 17:17, Ps. 119:160*). The unity of the church is the work of the Spirit *with and through* the Written Word of God. The Holy Spirit will never lead us to doubt, criticize, go beyond, or fall short of Bible teaching. Instead, He makes us appreciate the divine authority of Scripture. The Holy Spirit never draws us away from the Written Word, any more than from the Living Word. Instead, He keeps us in constant, conscious, and willing submission to both. The Bible is the foundational source for any theological unity worldwide. Were we to lessen or weaken our implicit belief in the Bible as God's Word of truth to us, the unity of the church would be destroyed.

How much time do you spend in the Word? More important, how can you learn to submit to its teachings?

The Holy Spirit Unites the Church in Faith and Doctrine

“One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (*Eph. 4:5, 6*).

What is Paul telling us here about unity and where it comes from?

Unity in faith and doctrine is accomplished only in faithfulness to the Word of God. The Lord, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, forms a spiritual bond with every believer. The same new birth, generated by the Holy Spirit, the same obedience to the Word of God, enabled by the Holy Spirit, leads to a unity of faith and practice that transcends all human and cultural differences.

While we are called to submit to the Word of God and to do everything we can to maintain peace with everyone (*Rom. 12:18*), we ultimately cannot bring about theological unity or unity of purpose as a church body. For unity is not so much a work to be achieved but a gift of the Holy Spirit, who works on each believer individually and on the church corporately.

The theological foundation of this unity is the Word of God. Any appeal to the Spirit without the Written Word can lead to suspect doctrines and practices. At the same time, any appeal to the Written Word of God without the Holy Spirit dries up the Word and makes it barren. Because there is only one Lord, there is only one faith that leads to one baptism. Only in joyful faithfulness to the Word of God will we be able to see unity within our church. And if there is no unity in faith and doctrine, there will be no unity in mission.

“We have one Lord, one faith, one baptism. The gospel of Christ is to reach all classes, all nations, all tongues and people. The influence of the gospel is to unite in one great brotherhood. We have only one Model that we are to imitate in character building, and then we all shall have Christ’s mold; we shall be in perfect harmony; nationalities will blend in Jesus Christ, having the same mind, and the same judgment, speaking the same things, and with one mouth glorifying God.”—Ellen G. White, *Our High Calling*, p. 171.

Look at the Ellen G. White statement above. Not worrying about others and what others do, but only yourself, ask: *What can I do to help reach this wonderful goal of unity?*

The Holy Spirit Unites the Church in Mission and Service

Read Acts 2:4–11, 16–21. What was the result of the Holy Spirit’s being poured out on the New Testament believers?

The Holy Spirit was responsible for the most powerful missionary outreach that history had witnessed to that point. God can do more through a small group that is united in their devotion to Him than He can through a large group divided in their loyalties. But God can do even greater things when we all have devoted our lives and our energies, our talents and our resources, to Him.

Out of the unity in life and mission of the believers grew the New Testament church. A small and timid group of believers was changed into a powerful troop that became an effective tool that reached people from many different cultures and languages. They were united in proclaiming “the mighty deeds of God” (*Acts 2:11, NASB*). The same God who was active in New Testament times will continue to be active at the end of time, when the work needs to be finished before He comes again.

Read Acts 2:42–47. In what other things were the New Testament believers united?

The Pentecost mission enterprise was accompanied by a number of other factors where the early church stood united. They were united in Bible study and continually devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching (*Acts 2:42*). They were united in fellowship and the breaking of bread, possibly a reference to united worship (*Acts 2:42*). They were united in prayer (*Acts 2:42*) and in praising God (*Acts 2:47*). They were united in serving those in need when they freely shared what they possessed and had all things in common (*Acts 2:44, 45*). United Bible study and fellowship will result in the desire to share the good news with others and to help others in very practical ways. The Holy Spirit will open our eyes to the needs of those around us.

What activities in your local church help to reveal the unity of your church? What more could be done?

Further Thought: “This is the work in which we also are to be engaged. Instead of living in expectation of some special season of excitement, we are wisely to improve present opportunities, doing that which must be done in order that souls may be saved. Instead of exhausting the powers of our mind in speculations in regard to the times and seasons which the Lord has placed in His own power, and withheld from men, we are to yield ourselves to the control of the Holy Spirit, to do present duties, to give the bread of life, unadulterated with human opinions, to souls who are perishing for the truth.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 186.

“Every individual is striving to become a center of influence, and until God works for His people, they will not see that subordination to God is the only safety for any soul. His transforming grace upon human hearts will lead to unity that has not yet been realized, for all who are assimilated to Christ will be in harmony with one another. The Holy Spirit will create unity.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 3, pp. 20, 21.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 What does Ellen G. White mean when she says that “every individual is striving to become a center of influence”? Why is that such a natural tendency of all of us, and what can we do to fight this tendency in our own lives? (See also *Phil. 2:3, 4*.)
- 2 Some argue that what will really unite us is service, not doctrine. In fact, they argue that doctrine tends to divide people; thus, it should not be made prominent. But why can’t there be unity in mission and service if there is division in doctrine? Why is a commonly shared faith a powerful factor for united and effective mission?
- 3 At the same time, how much room is there for theological differences? Few people are going to understand truth in the same way. How can we be united as a church while, at the same time, allowing for minor differences that will arise? How do people in your local church deal with differences in understanding and yet still maintain unity?
- 4 How can the Bible be an instrument that will bring unity? What attitude is needed in our study of the Word of God so that we can be united as a church in mission and in faith?

The Newspaper Ad: Part 2

Kim met some Christians who introduced him to a church. He attended the worship services and enjoyed the music, but in time Kim realized that the worship services were more about experience and feelings than about reason and logic. He yearned for something more, something to satisfy his mind as well as his spirit. He wondered whether he would always be searching and never really finding.

Then Kim found the newspaper ad. He decided to attend the Bible study meeting. Perhaps there he would find the answers he was looking for.

Kim was amazed at what he learned during the Bible study. He never realized the depth of God's love and the plan of salvation. He continued to attend and built his life on the truths he was learning. He discarded the twisted philosophies that had clouded his understanding of God. Kim realized that God was not only logical but the author of perfect logic and meaning. His spiritual life grew as he studied for himself God's great truths.

Kim shared small bits of what he was learning with his family. They listened politely, but he could tell that they weren't really interested. Kim has kept sharing, hoping that his family will eventually accept his faith in God, just as they accepted his principles of healthful living.

Eight months after Kim found the newspaper ad, he was baptized into Christ and joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Kim is learning how to share his faith with others and how to find answers to his personal questions in his Bible. He enjoys sharing with others the truths he has come to love and wants to help others find God as he has. He hosts a weekly dinner and Bible study that 10 to 12 people attend.

The church in Denmark is small, and few are interested in religion. But Kim wants to help the church grow. He continues to share bits of truth and testimony with his family, hoping that one day they will come to know Jesus as he has.

Denmark is a small country made up of a peninsula and almost 500 islands. It lies south of Norway and Sweden. It's a wealthy and modern nation, and, as in most European countries, its people have lost their sense of need for God.

This quarter a portion of your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help to build an international evangelistic youth center in Oslo, Norway. To learn more, visit www.adventistmission.org/mission-quarterlies.

The Holy Spirit, *the* Word, and Prayer



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *John 15:7; Matt. 7:7; Ps. 66:18; James 1:6–8; 1 John 5:14, 15; Acts 2:38.*

Memory Text: “The Spirit also helps us in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (*Romans 8:26, 27, NKJV*).

True spirituality and prayer go together. There is no real spiritual life without vigorous prayer. After the need for repentance, perhaps one of the greatest and most urgent needs is a revival of our prayer life. The good news is that even in our prayers we are not left without the help of the Holy Spirit. Prayer draws us closer to God; it lifts us up into His presence. The prayer of faith enables us to live in response to the abundance of God's promises. Our lives are transformed when we claim the blessings God has promised in His Word. God is more than able to supply all of our needs according to His riches (*Phil. 4:19*). True prayer and authentic spirituality always have God at the center of our attention, and both are rooted in His Written Word.

We should not be basing our spiritual life on our unsteady experience and subjective feelings, nor focusing our prayers on suspect contemplative and meditative practices. Rather, our spirituality has to be guided by the Bible and to follow God's will as revealed in His Word. It is the Holy Spirit who awakens in us a desire to seek God's presence in prayer and to lift up one another in our supplications.

* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 11.

Prayer That Is Pleasing to God

Even though clothed in pious cloaks, many prayers are guided by questionable motives. We might pray that someone's life be spared because we do not like living alone. We might pray for success in God's work because we are playing an important role in it. We might pray for the conversion of a person because then our life will be easier. Often our prayers center more on what we want rather than on what God wants. Prayer that is pleasing to God has a different focus.

Read John 15:7. Why is it important for our prayers that we abide in Jesus and His Words abide in us? What other focus will our prayers have if we don't abide in Jesus?

To seek God first and to enjoy His companionship is more important than anything else He might give to us. If God comes first in our lives, we will want to do what He wants; His thoughts will shape our desires. Once God is the center of prayer, we will begin to pray from His perspective. We will start to see our whole lives through His eyes. This perspective ennobles prayer.

God is deeply interested in us. He longs to be part of all aspects of our lives: our worries, our fears, our wishes, our hopes, our desires, our success, our joys, our failures—everything. We can talk about these things with Him as with a good friend. And we look at all of it through His eyes.

Prayer does not change God; it changes us, because we are brought into the life-changing presence of God.

“Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 93.

What a powerful quote! It captures so much of the reality of what prayer does to us and for us. Prayer alone makes us open receptacles for the grace, the power, and the presence of God in our lives. Who hasn't at some point experienced the reality of how prayer can draw us closer to God?

Think about your prayer life: that is, what you pray for, when you pray, why you pray, and so forth. What does it tell you about your own spiritual state and your own relationship to God? What changes might you need to make?

The Foundation of Biblical Prayer: Ask God

Read Matthew 7:7. Before we can receive anything from God, we have to ask for it. Why is our asking so important, since God knows everything anyhow?

Asking reveals our desire and expresses our trust in God. Through prayer we approach Him, from whom we seek support and help. When we ask God, we also publicly give Him permission to become active in our behalf. God wants to be asked. He desires that we bring to Him our prayer requests. If we do not ask Him, we will not receive the gifts He has promised. Jesus said: “Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks, it will be opened” (Luke 11:9, 10, NKJV).

Read Mark 11:24; 1 John 5:14, 15; and Psalm 66:18. Why is no prayer request too big for God? Why is it good to know that God is generous and loves to give out of His abundance? What is the prerequisite for God to fulfill our prayers?

We truly can ask God for anything. No request is too small or unimportant for Him. No request is so big that God cannot handle it. He is omnipotent. By faith we may claim every promise in the Bible and receive the promised gifts from His hands according to His will (2 Cor. 1:20).

Yet, there are some conditions to be met in order to receive what we are asking. If we are not willing to submit fully to God, and if our requests reflect only our selfish and sinful desires, God will not answer our prayers (see Isa. 59:1, 2). An important condition for the fulfillment of our prayers is our willingness to follow God’s will and to be obedient. “All His [God’s] gifts are promised on condition of obedience.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 145. Knowing that God is generous, we can come boldly to Him. “The Lord is not glorified by the tame supplications which show that nothing is expected. He desires every one who believes, to approach the throne of grace with earnestness and assurance.”—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, Aug. 7, 1901.

The Foundation of Biblical Prayer: Believe

Read Mark 11:24. Besides asking, what other aspect does Jesus mention in connection with prayer?

Asking alone is not enough. There is a second important aspect that needs to be present in our prayers: faith. The book of Hebrews tells us that “without faith it is impossible to please” God (*Heb. 11:6, NASB*). When we kneel down before God and open the Bible to any of the more than three thousand promises and then ask God, with the simplicity of a small child, to fulfill His promises in our behalf, we have to believe that He will do what is best for us in His time.

Read James 1:6–8. How does the text describe the person who lacks faith? Why is faith a prerequisite to receiving the promised gifts?

If we come to God, we must believe that He exists and that He will reward those who seek Him. Effectual prayer must be accompanied by a belief not only that God *can* answer, but that He *will* do so according to His divine will.

In the Bible, believing is related to trusting. We can trust someone only when we know the other person to be trustworthy. When we entertain doubts that God will keep His promises, we waver and cannot expect that we will receive anything from Him. To believe means to take God at His word. It means that we depend on God and His promises, even when our feelings tell us otherwise. For “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (*Heb. 11:1, NASB*). Faith clings to God’s promises because we trust what He has said (*Heb. 11:11*). Faith knows that “it is impossible for God to lie” (*Heb. 6:18, NASB*). God is the same, yesterday, today, and forever (*Heb. 13:8*). Faith knows that for God nothing is impossible (*Luke 1:37*).

Faith opens the door to the divine treasure house. Through the Holy Spirit, God moves the hearts of men and women to trust the Word of God, and through faith, our prayers move the arm of omnipotence.

What helps you to grow stronger in faith? What aspect of Jesus helps you to have confidence in His willingness and ability to help you in your times of need?

The Foundation of Biblical Prayer: Claim God's Promises

All faith is useless if we do not claim the things for which we have prayed.

Read 1 John 5:14, 15. What is the reason that we can be confident that God hears us and that we receive what we have requested from Him?

The third aspect of Bible prayer is reception. After asking God and believing His promises, we need to claim what He has promised. We claim God's promise by returning thanks to God that we have received it. Thus, the promises are applied to our hearts. Ellen G. White said that "for any gift He has promised, we may ask; then we are to believe that we receive, and return thanks to God that we have received."—*Education*, p. 258.

In Luke 8:11 Jesus compares the Word of God to a seed. In the same way that the whole apple tree is contained in an apple seed, the gift of God is contained in His promises. When we claim the promise and thank God for it, we already possess the gift He has promised. We receive the promised gift by faith even before we might feel or see it.

The example of the resurrection of Lazarus in John 11 illustrates that Jesus prayed in this way. Jesus knew exactly what God's will in this situation was. John 11:11 tells us that He was willing to do God's will and that He was obedient. In John 11:39–41, we read that Jesus thanked the Father in advance that He would resurrect Lazarus, even though Lazarus was still in the grave. When Jesus had thanked God, He did receive the fulfillment of His request. As God's children we are to live on God's promises, not on His explanations. Even though we can't explain everything, we can trust His promises.

"The Lord says, 'Call upon Me in the day of trouble.' Ps. 50:15. He invites us to present to Him our perplexities and necessities, and our need of divine help. He bids us be instant in prayer. As soon as difficulties arise, we are to offer to Him our sincere, earnest petitions. By our importunate prayers we give evidence of our strong confidence in God. The sense of our need leads us to pray earnestly, and our heavenly Father is moved by our supplications."—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 172.

Why is it so important to always bring everything to God in prayer?

Praying for the Holy Spirit

Read Ephesians 3:16 and Acts 2:38. What do these texts tell us about receiving the Holy Spirit in our lives?

There are many things we can pray for, but there is one great need in this time of peril in which we live: it is the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is the greatest gift that Jesus could give. In giving the Holy Spirit, God could not have given His people more. To this gift nothing could be added (after all, what could be added to Divinity Himself?). Through Him and His work in our lives, all our needs are supplied. The blessing of the Holy Spirit will bring in its train all other blessings.

There is, however, one major obstacle—and that is ourselves, because we are often unprepared to receive the Holy Spirit.

As in the days of the New Testament church, we have to realize that we first need to repent and surrender our lives fully to Jesus. Yes, it is only the prompting of the Holy Spirit that even allows us to do that.

However, when we respond to His prompting, then repentance for sin is the firstfruit of the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. In humility and faith, we need to confess our sins so that He can cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We need to understand just how fallen we are and how much we need God and His grace in our lives. Without Him, we are lost, dead in our sins, and doomed to eternal loss.

Thus, in earnest prayer, we will fulfill the conditions upon which God has promised to give us His Holy Spirit. Then all we have to do is to ask God, and He will gladly grant us His Spirit. “The heavenly Parent is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children.”—Ellen G. White, *Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 284.

As with other spiritual things, the gift of the Holy Spirit is never an end in itself. He is given to elevate Jesus, to reproduce Christ’s character in our lives, and to enable us to serve others in building up the body of Christ, the church. So any worship practice, public or private, that elevates the Spirit above Jesus Christ is wrong. For it is through Jesus that we “have our access in one Spirit to the Father” (*Eph. 2:18, NASB*).

Why is the gift of the Holy Spirit the greatest gift that Jesus could give to us? What has been your experience with the reality of the Holy Spirit in your life? How different would your life be without this gift?

Further Thought: Read Ellen G. White, “Asking to Give,” pp. 139–149, in *Christ’s Object Lessons*. For a helpful collection of encouraging promises, read Ellen G. White, *God Has Promised* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1982).

Without prayer, we would have no spiritual power in our lives, because prayer connects us to the Source of that power. Without prayer we would have no vital link with God. We would become empty vessels who might have “a form of godliness” but would be devoid of the power and promise of the gifts from on high. And, no question, as we have seen all this week—we have been given wonderful promises about God’s answering prayer. But what about the times when we don’t get what we pray for, even when we have sought to meet all the conditions to the best of our God-given ability? “But be not discouraged if your prayers do not seem to obtain an immediate answer. The Lord sees that prayer is often mixed with earthliness. Men pray for that which will gratify their selfish desires, and the Lord does not fulfill their requests in the way which they expect. He takes them through tests and trials, He brings them through humiliations, until they see more clearly what their necessities are. He does not give to men those things which will gratify a debased appetite and which will prove an injury to the human agent and make him a dishonor to God. He does not give men that which will gratify their ambition and work simply for self-exaltation. When we come to God we must be submissive and contrite of heart, subordinating everything to His sacred will.”—Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places*, p. 89.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 In what ways does prayer impact our whole spiritual existence? That is, what effect does prayer have on you when you pray? In what ways are you different after you have prayed than before you did?
- 2 What do you say to someone who has prayed and prayed for something and it hasn’t happened as the person had hoped and prayed for, such as the healing of a sick child or the like? How do we learn to trust God even in situations like this?
- 3 In class, talk about your own experiences with prayer, and about what it means to you. What have you learned about prayer that could help others who might be struggling with understanding the purpose of prayer?
- 4 Why is it important to pray even if we don’t fully understand how it all works?

Something Beautiful: Part 1

Editor's Note: In the following three-part story, Kim Laovin from Stockholm, Sweden, tells how God transformed her life of misery into something beautiful.

For 25 years, more than half my life, the first thing I did every morning was inject heroin into my veins. I used heroin to get through the day. Then one July morning I awoke and knew that I was done letting drugs run my life. I knew I would get sick if I stopped taking drugs, but I was determined to get clean.

Drugs were not only my life—they were my livelihood. I had a lovely big house, owned a good car, and had lots of nice clothes. But when I gave up drugs, the beautiful things around me seemed filthy and disgusting. They had been purchased with drug money. I sold or gave away everything. Then with only a suitcase of things left, I moved to another town.

I suffered all the symptoms of withdrawal, but I refused to go back on drugs. I knew if I could only tough it out long enough, I would feel better. Weeks went by, and I was still very weak and tired. My chest hurt, and I could not walk more than a block.

I went to the doctor, and after he examined me, he declared, “You have a serious heart problem. Your heart is enlarged and is working hard, but it is doing only half the work it should. The pain you feel is angina. It is pain caused when the heart does not get enough oxygen.” I realized that, ironically, the drugs I had been taking had masked these symptoms for years.

The doctor gave me medicine and sent me home. But I had no real home to go back to. I had been staying with a friend, but my friend could not keep me forever. I was sick, lonely, and homeless. I started calling my relatives. They were happy to hear from me and happy to hear I was no longer taking drugs, but they had reasons why I could not come and stay with them. Finally, an uncle took me in. He and my aunt were kind and took me to see a nearby doctor.

“Have you taken the medicine you were prescribed?” the doctor asked.

“No,” I admitted. “I have just kicked a drug addiction, and I don’t want to become addicted to these drugs.”

To be continued in next week's Inside Story.

Grieving *and* Resisting the Spirit



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Acts 7:51; Heb. 10:24, 25; Eph. 4:25–5:2; 1 Thess. 5:19–21; Mark 3:28, 29.*

Memory Text: “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (*Ephesians 4:30, NKJV*).

The Holy Spirit has the unique ability to lead sinners to an awareness of their true sinful state. He also awakens in us a desire to accept Jesus and His forgiveness of our sins. The Holy Spirit possesses a matchless power to make us overcomers and to enable us to reflect the beautiful character of Jesus.

At the same time, this powerful and mighty Holy Spirit can be resisted by feeble sinners. He does not force Himself upon us.

Sin is very alluring, very appealing. Yet, it is highly deceptive and leads to death. It is diametrically opposed to God and His pure holiness and goodness. Reflecting this divine holiness, the Holy Spirit is opposed to sin in every form, and He is grieved when we sin and are unwilling to give it up. As powerful as the Holy Spirit is, His positive impact can be quenched, and we can resist Him when we continue in our sinful life. The Gospels even tell us that there is one sin that cannot be forgiven: blasphemy against the Spirit (*Matt. 12:31, 32*).

This week we will study biblical aspects that deal with grieving, quenching, and resisting the Holy Spirit, and with the sin that will not be forgiven.

* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 18.

Resisting the Holy Spirit

Read Acts 7:51. What warning was given here, and how does it apply to us today?

There are a number of sins specifically mentioned in Scripture as sins against the Holy Spirit. Many of those sins are on the individual level. However, there is also a corporate dimension involved, as we can conclude from Acts 7:51. Stephen points out that his accusers are stiff-necked, as were the rebellious Israelites when they worshiped the golden calf (*Exod. 33:3*). They resisted the Holy Spirit because they refused to listen to what the Holy Spirit would impress through God's prophets upon their hearts. This pattern of opposition to God and His plan ultimately led some to reject the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ. Instead of following Jesus, they made external worship a substitute for obedience to the living Word of God.

It is an amazing thought that frail human beings, created by God and dependent on Him, are able to resist the work of the Holy Spirit and ultimately the grace of God. As powerful as God is, He does not force Himself upon our free will. He respects our choices.

After all, if God wanted to force us to obey Him, why didn't He do it in Eden with Adam and Eve and thus spare the whole world the crisis of sin? God has made us free beings, with the power to make moral choices, either for life or for death, either for good or for evil. What a sacred—and costly—gift we have each been given!

While everyone is responsible for his or her own decisions, we also have a corporate responsibility: we should encourage one another to be faithful, to obey God's Word, and to stay close to Jesus (*Heb. 10:24, 25*). We resist the Holy Spirit today when we resist the Word of God and when we do not heed the message of His prophets.

It's so easy to look back at ancient Israel and judge and criticize them for all their mistakes. But what about our own poor choices? How would you feel if they were made as public as were the mistakes of ancient Israel?

**What are ways we can help others toward “love and good works”?
How are you responsible for fostering “love and good works” in others?**

Grieving the Holy Spirit: Part 1

Read Ephesians 4:30. Here Paul uses an imperative and admonishes us not to grieve the Holy Spirit. What does it mean to grieve the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is a personal being, not just a divine force. That is why He can be grieved. But how do we grieve the Holy Spirit? Perhaps we should remember that one of the tasks of the Holy Spirit is to open our eyes to sin (*John 16:8*). He leads us to Jesus, who forgives our sins and sanctifies us. After all, God's Spirit is called "holy." This means that He hates sin. But He rejoices when we are obedient to God in all things and think and speak what is pure and holy. On the other hand, this also means that He is grieved when we cherish anything that is unworthy of our divine calling. Any determination on our part to hold on to sin or to downplay the seriousness of sin grieves Him. Grieving the Holy Spirit is a serious thing.

The context of Paul's statement in Ephesians 4:30 about the grieving of the Holy Spirit deals with the lifestyle one lived before being converted by Christ, and what came after that conversion. As new creatures in Christ, we should be patient and gentle with each other, forbearing one another in love, and being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (*Eph. 4:2, 3*). Being renewed by the Spirit (*Eph. 4:23*), we are now following Christ, our new head (*Eph. 4:15*), and so we do not walk in the vanity of our minds, as the Gentiles do (*Eph. 4:17*). Instead, we live a life that is pleasing to God (*Eph. 4:24–31*).

Whenever we allow any of the negative things mentioned in these verses in chapter 4 to find room in our hearts, and when they manifest themselves in our words and deeds, then the Spirit is sad and grieved. Grieving the Holy Spirit means to spurn His sanctifying presence and His life-transforming power because we continue to willfully sin.

The Holy Spirit is not indifferent to how we live. Read Ephesians 4:25–31, and list the specific moral behaviors that grieve the Holy Spirit. Why is the Holy Spirit grieved by these things?

Grieving the Holy Spirit: Part 2

That the Holy Spirit can be grieved tells us that God is not indifferent to us and what we do. God is affected by what we decide and how we live.

Read Ephesians 4:25–5:2. What are we told to do here, and how different would our lives be were we to follow these biblical commands?

In positive terms: we delight the Holy Spirit when we speak the truth in love; when we are angry about sin, but do not sin in our anger; when we work with our own hands and use the product of our labor to do good for the needy; when we speak in an edifying manner and impart grace to our hearers; and when we are kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving.

If we claim to be Christians, yet live as though Christ had never come and our lives are not affected by His leading and His love, then we grieve the Holy Spirit. When we confess that we believe in the Truth, but how we act and behave contradicts that confession, we grieve the Holy Spirit. Lack of moral integrity also grieves the Spirit. Our outreach efforts must not be divorced from our ethical behavior. If we live in such a way that others realize that we truly are His children and reflect Jesus, we bring joy to the heart of God.

Read Ephesians 4:3, 4, 15, 16, 32. What do these texts reveal about the communal aspects of living in the Spirit? How does a spirit-filled life reveal itself in the community with other believers?

It is interesting that in Ephesians 4 there is also a distinct communal aspect. The idea of unity is mentioned several times. Paul is concerned that we maintain the unity of the Spirit because we live the life of God in the context of “one another” (*Eph. 4:32*). How we relate to one another in the church, “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (*Eph. 4:3, NKJV*) is a crucial part of not grieving the Spirit. How we treat one another in the church, which is a temple of the Holy Spirit (*1 Cor. 3:16, 17*), really does matter to God. How we consider one another in the body of Christ is of prime importance to God’s Spirit.

It’s fine to know the truth, the three angels’ messages (*Rev. 14:6–12*), but ask yourself this question: How do you treat others, especially those who are under you or those who can do nothing for you; that is, those that have nothing to offer you in return?

Quenching the Holy Spirit

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:19–21. How can the Holy Spirit be quenched?

The word “quenching” suggests the idea of a fire. The same Greek root word is used in 1 Thessalonians 5:19 and in Ephesians 6:16. This suggests that something about the Holy Spirit is like a fire that we can extinguish. We should remember that the Holy Spirit does two significant things for us: He gives us knowledge of sin, and He gives us power to overcome sin. Both are related to sanctification.

Through the Word of God, the Spirit tells us what we need to know in order to live a holy life, and through His indwelling power He enables us to change our lives according to this knowledge. One way we can avoid quenching the Spirit is to “not despise prophetic utterances” (1 Thess. 5:20, *NASB*). Paul instructed the Thessalonian believers not to despise prophetic utterances, and yet he called for their discernment (1 Thess. 5:21). While we are to be open to the Spirit in our congregational life and should not quench the work of the Holy Spirit, we also need discernment, because false teachings and false prophets will continue to plague the church.

Not all spirits are benign. The Spirit-inspired Word of God, however, is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (*Ps. 119:105*). By it we have a standard to measure even new prophetic utterances. In biblical times such a lamp involved a burning wick that shed light before the feet of those who walked in the night. The Bible tells us how to “walk in the Spirit” (*Gal. 5:25*). We do that by surrendering ourselves to the teachings of the Word of God and by obeying the promptings of the Holy Spirit as He points us in the way that we should live.

Many who profess to believe that the Bible is the Word of God interpret it in ways that all but denude the Scriptures of any real authority, robbing them of any real power in their lives. Also, when we despise the Word of God and treat it with disrespect or neglect to apply it to ourselves, we are snuffing out this lamp that is given to lead us on our way and to stir our consciences toward good works.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:7, 8. What does it mean to be called “in holiness” (*NKJV*)? In what areas of your life might you need to ask yourself if, indeed, you are acting “in holiness”?

Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit

Read Mark 3:28, 29; Luke 12:10; and Matthew 12:31, 32. If all sins and blasphemies can be forgiven, what is it that cannot be forgiven?

Perhaps no other sin has caused greater uncertainty and anguish among Christians, and has been more misunderstood, than has the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Some think that Jesus has in mind some specific sins that are particularly grievous. We do well to remind ourselves, however, that *all* sins are heinous to God, even though some sins might have more drastic consequences than do others. But what did Jesus mean when He spoke about the unforgivable sin?

Actually none of these texts say that this sin *cannot* be forgiven; just that it *will not* be forgiven. Let's remember: the work of the Holy Spirit is to lead sinners to an awareness of their sin and to awaken in them the desire to accept Jesus, who alone forgives sin. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, therefore, must be understood as the deliberate and persistent repudiation of Jesus' saving work. It occurs when an individual willfully and obstinately resists the Spirit's testimony to Christ and His salvation and grace.

Jesus isn't talking about someone uttering a few slanderous words. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is committed only in the context of an attitude of persistent unbelief and open hostility toward Jesus. Blaspheming the Holy Spirit is not a single episode; it is a determined way of life.

"In the place of receiving the evidence offered them, in the place of recognizing in Christ's works the endowment of heaven, they held right on to their wicked purposes, and said, He performed this wonderful work through the devil. This was the sin against the Holy Ghost." —Ellen G. White, *Loma Linda Messages*, p. 156.

When the human heart is settled in stubborn opposition to God and, thus, consciously refuses to give Jesus His due—the heart is hardened and fails to acknowledge the truth of the Holy Spirit's testimony to God's saving sacrifice in Jesus Christ. This sin is beyond the possibility of forgiveness, not because God is powerless or unwilling to forgive, but because the person is not able to recognize his or her sin. Therefore, he or she does not accept forgiveness through Jesus. This attitude, of course, has eternal consequences.

How can we be sure that, regardless of whatever we profess about ourselves, we are not living in opposition to God and resisting the Holy Spirit? (See, for instance, 1 John 5:3 and Rom. 8:14.)

Further Thought: The mere fact that people anxiously ask whether they have sinned the unforgivable sin reveals that they most surely haven't. If they had committed it, they certainly wouldn't be worrying about it. Their worry is all the evidence they need that, indeed, they are still open to the Spirit's leading. What the person should do is claim the righteousness of Jesus and, clinging to Jesus' merits, press on ahead in faith and obedience. Only under the covering of Christ's righteousness, which is the "righteousness of God" Himself (*Rom. 10:3*), can they have the peace and assurance that they so sorely lack now.

There is, really, only one person God cannot forgive, and that is the person who persistently refuses to come to Jesus for forgiveness. "The sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit does not lie in any sudden word or deed; it is the firm, determined resistance of truth and evidence."—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1093. "No one need look upon the sin against the Holy Ghost as something mysterious and indefinable. The sin against the Holy Ghost is the sin of persistent refusal to respond to the invitation to repent."—Page 1093.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 If someone were to come to you, afraid that they had committed the unpardonable sin, what would you say and what texts would you use to help? Why is an understanding of salvation by faith alone so crucial for helping someone who feels he or she is hopelessly lost?
- 2 We quench the Holy Spirit when we refuse to act or speak as He leads. Where are we in danger of quenching the Holy Spirit? That is, in what aspects of our lives (if any) do we find ourselves resisting God's leading, and how can we learn to make the needed surrender?
- 3 Sometimes God allows certain circumstances to come into our lives that we resent or that we don't understand. Such was the case, for instance, with Job. Why can a resentful mind-set dampen the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives? How can we trust God more fully and submit our lives completely to Him, even during the most difficult times?
- 4 Fearful of being "tainted" by what they feel are corrupt influences in the church, some pull away completely from the body and strike out on their own. What's wrong with that idea, and why is it not the biblical model for a Christian to follow?

Something Beautiful: Part 2

“I understand your concern,” the doctor said. “But these are good drugs. They will help you, and they are not addicting. Tell me: What have you done in your lifetime that you really, really enjoyed?”

I thought hard. “Well, once my uncle and I went on a long hike for more than 100 miles in northern Sweden. It was wonderful.” The doctor promised me that if I took the medicine I would one day be able to take that hike again. I went home willing to try. Three months later, I could walk my uncle’s dog in the forest and enjoy it.

One day when I was out walking, I found a little cabin on a lake. I inquired and found that while it had no electricity or running water, I could rent it for less than what I had spent each day when I was on drugs. I moved into the two-room cabin and soon was busy carrying water and other supplies. Somehow I found this simple lifestyle attractive and comforting.

When I returned to the doctor, he was pleased with my progress. He told me that he and his wife had been praying for me. Then I learned that he was a Seventh-day Adventist. I borrowed a Bible from a friend and started reading it. If it was God who had helped me get over drugs, then I needed to know Him better. I started in Genesis and read about 100 pages, until I bogged down in Numbers and put it aside.

The doctor told me about a health rehabilitation center run by Adventists and suggested I go there to regain my strength and energy. I fell in love with the place and the people. Many of the patients were Adventists, and they talked about what Jesus was doing in their lives. This rekindled my desire to know God better.

I had never gone to church, except to attend an occasional wedding or funeral, but I started attending the Adventist church at the rehabilitation center. I was impressed by the Bible study. I wanted what these people had; I wanted to be a Christian, too. But I did not understand that I could just be a Christian. I thought there were some things I had to do before I could become a Christian.

To be continued in next week's Inside Story.

The Work of the Holy Spirit



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *John 16:8–11; Rom. 5:10; Heb. 4:15, 16; 1 Pet. 5:8, 9; 1 John 5:12, 13; Ps. 31:24.*

MemoryText: “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (*Romans 15:13, NASB*).

As we come to the end of our study this quarter on the Holy Spirit and spirituality, we will focus on one other decisive work of the Spirit that has not yet received our attention.

When Jesus announced to the disciples that He would go to the Father, He promised to send them the Holy Spirit. “ ‘But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you’ ” (*John 14:26, NKJV*).

According to Jesus, the Holy Spirit is a *parakletos*, that is, a “Helper” or “Comforter” or an “Advocate” who intercedes for us. At the same time Jesus also announced the work that this Advocate would do: He will “convict” the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment (*John 16:8, NKJV*).

During our final week we will study in more detail this specific work of the Holy Spirit. We also will learn how this work of the Spirit is related to two other important aspects of His ministry for us: our assurance of salvation and the glorious hope that propels our life as disciples of Jesus Christ.

* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 25.

Conviction of Sin

Read John 16:8, 9. What crucial work does the Holy Spirit do for us, and why is this so important?

Jesus has called the Holy Spirit the *paraclete*, a word rich in meaning and one that conveys the idea of *helper*, *advocate*, and *comforter*. The Holy Spirit does not enter into this important work of conviction as the accuser of the brethren or as our prosecutor. He is sent by Jesus not to condemn us but, rather, to help us see our need of grace.

Only a comforter will be received as a helper. It is a great tragedy that Christians, however well-intentioned, often approach sinners with an accusing spirit rather than a helping one. If we go around pointing out sin in the lives of other people, then we do something that Jesus has not called us to do. After all, who are we to point out sin in others when we are hardly sinless ourselves?

Read Romans 2:1 and Matthew 7:3. What message must we take from these verses?

We are His witnesses, not His prosecutors. We are called to be witnesses of His redemptive power, not to condemn others for their wrongs. In trying to convict other people of their sins, we assume a work that is not ours; it is the work of the Holy Spirit.

It is the Comforter—not us—who shall “convince” (*John 16:8, RSV*) the world of what sin really is. People who have not committed their lives to Jesus often have no real sense of what sin truly is, and just how destructive it can be.

The idea here is not that the Spirit will list specific erroneous acts. Instead, He goes to the most fundamental sin of all: unbelief in Jesus Christ (*John 16:9*). Our deepest misery and alienation consists not in our moral imperfection but in our estrangement from God and our refusal to accept the One whom God has sent for the purpose of rescuing us from this condition.

The fundamental problem of all sin is that we do not believe in Jesus and, thus, reject the only One who can save us from our sin and guilt. This is the sin that puts self at the center of things and refuses to believe the Word of God. Only the Holy Spirit can open our hearts and minds to our great need of repentance and of the Redemption that is found through Christ’s death in our behalf.

The Need of Righteousness

John 16:8 said that the Holy Spirit will convict the world, not just of sin but also of *righteousness*. In other words, the world, which does not know what sin really is, does not know what true righteousness is either.

Unconverted people imagine that external morality will suffice. They desire, not the righteousness of God but their own righteousness. They desire a righteousness that comes from their outward acts, such as obedience to the law of God. But our acts of obedience to the law can never justify us before God.

In Isaiah 64:6 the prophet describes all self-made righteous acts of the people of his day as “filthy rags.” Even our best religiously motivated, self-perceived righteousness is in fact the opposite: unrighteousness.

But the righteousness of Jesus is sufficient for us. It meets all the claims of the law of God. It counts with God the Father. And we can claim it for ourselves through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Read Romans 5:10 and Hebrews 4:15, 16. How is our righteousness related to Christ’s living ministry in the presence of the Father in heaven?

The righteousness that is demanded by the law is fulfilled by Jesus’ perfect life. He died in our behalf. Though rejected by those who put Him to death here on earth, He was welcomed by the Father in heaven. By means of the resurrection, God the Father placed the stamp of His approval upon Jesus’ life and redemptive work. Now Jesus lives to intercede for us (*Heb. 4:15, 16*), and He applies the merits of His death in our behalf because we do not have the righteousness needed for salvation.

Thus, we can live because He lives in us. “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (*Gal. 2:20, NKJV*). When Jesus lives in us, we walk by the Spirit (*Rom. 8:4*) and receive new spiritual life through the power of the Spirit (*compare with Gal. 3:2–5; 5:16, 18*).

The Father’s exaltation of Jesus in heaven is revealed in Christ’s powerful presence among us through the Spirit. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, His disciples live in growing conformity to Christ.

Have you experienced the reality of just how filthy your own attempts at righteousness really are? What does this teach you about your need of Christ’s righteousness instead?

Conviction About Judgment

Read John 16:8, 11. What judgment is Jesus referring to? Why is this judgment good news?

There remains one last great conviction that is part of the work of the Spirit: the conviction about judgment. Here is where much of our preaching on this passage seems to go in a wrong and harmful direction. Often a discussion of sin and righteousness seems to lead many professed Christians to pronounce a warning about the judgment on those who reject Christ. In doing so, they want to warn sinners, often with fearful overtones, of the future judgment that awaits them.

And though that judgment is a reality, this is not what Jesus talks about in John 16:11. The language indicates that the Lord is not talking about future judgment, as He did in John 12:48. Instead, the aspect of the judgment that Jesus now refers to is the good news that Satan has already been judged at Calvary. The devil, the great enemy of truth, is now living on borrowed time. Judgment will come, but the focus here is on an awareness that the prince of this world now already stands condemned (*John 12:31*).

Read 1 Peter 5:8, 9. How is Satan described by Peter? How can we resist him?

The devil, knowing that his time is short and that he has been fatally defeated at Calvary, is nevertheless still alive. And he is furious, trying to devour as many as he can. But he is a defeated enemy. Jesus has won the victory. The blood of Jesus makes us free.

When, during World War II, the Nazi troops had received the decisive blow with the successful Allied invasion of France on June 6, 1944, it was clear that Hitler was defeated. Yet, the eleven months between D-Day (when the attack was initiated) and VE Day (May 8, 1945, when the war ended in Europe) were the bloodiest of all. Similarly, Satan knows that he was decisively defeated at the cross. Yet, he stubbornly fights and tries to devour as many as he can. In these challenging times we are called to be sober and alert and to cast all our anxiety upon Jesus, because He cares for us (*1 Pet. 5:7, 8*).

Why is judgment good news? Who is our surety in the judgment? How can we preach about the judgment in such a way that we instill hope rather than fear?

The Assurance of Salvation

Read 1 John 5:12, 13; Romans 8:15–17; and 2 Corinthians 5:5. Once we have accepted Christ as our Savior, why can we have the assurance of eternal life? What is the basis for this assurance?

The Holy Spirit is the One who leads sinners to Jesus. Jesus' substitutionary death has reconciled us with God. Jesus' forgiveness sets us free to live a new life as God's adopted children. Now we are no longer God's enemies (*Rom. 5:10*), but we walk according to the Spirit (*Rom. 8:4*) and set our thinking on the things of the Spirit (*Rom. 8:5*). If we did not have the Spirit of Christ, we would not be His children and would not belong to Him (*Rom. 8:9*). But now we have the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us. He testifies to us that we belong to Jesus and that we are heirs of God and heirs with Christ (*Rom. 8:17*). The same powerful life that raised Jesus from the dead is now active in us and makes us, who were spiritually dead, alive (*Rom. 8:10*). Even more than that, He also seals in our hearts the assurance that we truly belong to God. Having heard and believed the gospel of our salvation, we were sealed in Jesus with the Holy Spirit, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance (*Eph. 1:13, 14, NASB*). Every believer may have this certainty (*1 John 5:12, 13*).

Read Ephesians 1:13, 14. What does it mean to be sealed by the Spirit?

Those who accept Christ are born again; that is, born “‘of the Spirit’” (*John 3:3, 5*). The Holy Spirit seals this fact in our hearts so that we can have assurance of being saved and experience the joy that comes from being a child of God. The Holy Spirit identifies us as belonging to Christ. “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ” (*Rom. 8:9, NIV*). We now have a consciousness that God is our loving Father and we are His dear children. The Holy Spirit is the down payment, the deposit, or the pledge toward the ultimate gift of eternal life and immortality that will be given to us at Jesus' second coming (*1 Cor. 15:51–54*). This is the hallmark of authentic faith. It is difficult to see how Christians can witness with convincing power without having such assurance.

“Talk courage, talk faith and hope, and you will be all light in the Lord. Keep thinking of the open door that Christ has set before you, that no man can shut. God will close the door to all evil, if you will give him a chance. When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up for you a standard against him.”—Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 16, 1889.

The Holy Spirit and Hope

Read Romans 5:4, 5; 15:13; and 1 Corinthians 13:13. How are love and hope related to each other? How is the Holy Spirit instrumental in giving us love and hope?

The Holy Spirit is the One who has poured out the love of God within our hearts. He connects us to God and makes God's love dwell in us. God's steadfast and unchanging love is the reason and the bedrock of our hope. Without love there would be no hope. Only love generates hope. Because God's love is combined with His faithfulness, we have the wonderful hope that He will come again and take us home to where He is.

Read Psalm 31:24. What effect does hope have on us?

Hope inspires. Hope gives new strength. Hope lets us sing and be joyful. Hope is essential for life. Without hope, what is the purpose of life?

Having hope, however, is something different from being optimistic. The optimist thinks that everything will get better: the weather, the economy, the school grades, the finances, et cetera. Hope, instead, is not blind optimism. Rather, it is grounded in God's faithfulness and in the promises that He has given in the past. Hope believes that God will fulfill what He has said because He is faithful and true. God has proven to be dependable, and He does not waver. His steadfastness and truth are the foundation for our hope.

No question: the foundation of our hope is found in Jesus on the cross. When we look to the cross, we can see in the most powerful way possible the reality of God's love for us. The Cross, with Jesus dying for our sins, gives us and the universe an unparalleled revelation of just what our God is truly like. Thus, as fallen and temporal beings in a vast cosmos, we can find hope, not in ourselves or in whatever "great" things we accomplish but in our God—a God who has revealed Himself to us on the cross.

How is the Advent hope grounded in God's faithful promises? How does hope influence our lives? How can we develop a lifestyle that reflects hope instead of despair?

Further Thought: Read selections of Ellen G. White, *Ye Shall Receive Power*, especially the October section, “Ready for the Spirit,” pp. 283–313.

We can summarize the activity of the Holy Spirit by saying that the Holy Spirit works harmoniously together with God the Father and God the Son to accomplish our salvation. The Holy Spirit awakens us from our spiritual death. He leads us to an awareness of our sinfulness and opens our eyes to the fact that we are in and of ourselves lost. He kindles in us the desire for change and leads us to Jesus Christ, who alone can meet the needs of our innermost being. He gives us assurance of salvation because He always points us to Jesus and to what Jesus has done for us. He conforms us to be more like Jesus. He keeps us faithful in our walk with God. He enables us to fulfill God’s will and effectively engage in mission. He generates the Written Word of God as our safe guide and norm for our Christian life and doctrine. Where would we be without the Holy Spirit? What could we do without the Holy Spirit? We would be miserable and lost and could do nothing that would give God the glory and honor. Thanks be to Jesus for having promised and sent the Holy Spirit. “The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people.”—Ellen G. White, *Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 13.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Dwell more on the questions of what is sin and what is righteousness. Why should we, as Christians who believe in the Bible as the Word of God, have a different understanding of what sin and righteousness are than do those who don’t believe in the Bible? What are those differences? What does the Bible teach us about sin and about righteousness that other sources do not?
- 2 Share with the members of your Sabbath School group what aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit has been most valuable to you. Why was it so important, and how has this impacted your life?
- 3 In class, talk about the hope that we have in Jesus. What are the reasons for this hope? That is, if someone were to ask about the “reason for the hope that is in you” (*1 Pet. 3:15, NKJV*), what answer would you give, and why? How convincing an argument could you make?
- 4 The lesson this week talked about the question of assurance of salvation. What is assurance of salvation? And if we have it, why do we have it? On what must it be based? And how does it differ from presumption?

Something Beautiful: Part 3

While I was at the rehabilitation center I spent a lot of time thinking about straightening out my life. I had committed some crimes while I was selling drugs, and this knowledge weighed on me. When I left the rehabilitation center, I went to the police and confessed that I had driven a getaway car while a friend committed a robbery. During the robbery my friend had killed someone, making me an accessory to murder.

I was arrested and sentenced to five years in prison. My friend was imprisoned for life. Other prisoners treated me badly when they learned that my confession had put my friend in jail. It took a long time for them to accept me.

While I was in prison, I asked a Seventh-day Adventist pastor to visit me. He came often, and we studied the Bible together. I accepted Jesus as my Savior during this time. Other church members also visited me, and soon I had more letters and visitors than anyone, thanks to the spirit of family among the Adventist members. I tried to pass the love that they showed me on to other prisoners when I could.

Some of the prisoners were not Swedish citizens. They would serve their time without visits from loved ones. When the Adventists learned about these people, they visited them and helped them with practical needs, and when the prisoners left prison, the church members kept in touch with them. Some of these women asked, "What kind of church do you belong to that cares about others like this?" I was glad my Adventist friends followed through with these needs. Some of these prisoners joined a Bible study correspondence course, and others joined my prayer group. Now that they have been released, I pray that they will search for God.

I had a checkup because of my heart problem. The doctor performed the test three times before she called in another doctor. He performed the test again, then asked me for my name. "We were not sure you were the same patient, because your heart is normal size and is working perfectly. I see no health problems here at all. Your angina is completely gone."

When I was released from prison, God provided work for me and a place to live. As I look back, I realize that God saved me from myself, saved my life from death, and then He made everything in my life so beautiful.

In our study guide for next quarter, entitled *Feed My Sheep: 1 and 2 Peter* by Robert McIver, we will be reading the words of Peter, who was with Jesus at most of the important moments in His ministry. Peter also was a prominent leader among the earliest Christians. These facts alone would make his letters worth reading. But these letters take on added interest given that they were written to churches that faced persecution from without and the danger of false teachers arising from within.

First and Second Peter also have practical words on how Christians should live. First and foremost, Christians should love one another (*1 Pet. 4:8*). Peter sums up his view by saying: “Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind” (*1 Pet. 3:8, NRSV*).

Peter’s epistles are a fervent proclamation of the gospel, the central message of the Bible. If anyone knew the saving grace of the Lord, it was Peter. This same Peter, who so openly denied His Lord, saying, “I do not know the man” (*Matt. 27:75*), was the same one who was later told by Jesus: “Feed my sheep” (*John 21:17*). These two epistles are examples of Peter doing just that: feeding the Lord’s sheep.

Lesson 1—The Person of Peter

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **Depart From Me!** (*Luke 5:1–9*)

MONDAY: **Confessing the Christ** (*Matt. 16:13–17*)

TUESDAY: **Walking on Water** (*Matt. 14:22–33*)

WEDNESDAY: **Denying His Lord** (*Luke 22:31–33, 54–62*)

THURSDAY: **Peter as Church Leader** (*Acts 2:14–36*)

Memory Text—*Matthew 14:30, 31*

Sabbath Gem: Peter knew what it was to make mistakes, to be forgiven, and to move on ahead in faith and humility. Having experienced for himself the grace of God, Peter remains a powerful voice for us all, who need to experience the same grace, as well.

Lesson 2—An Inheritance Incorruptible

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **To the Exiles** (*1 Pet. 1:1*)

MONDAY: **Elected** (*1 Pet. 1:2*)

TUESDAY: **Key Themes** (*1 Pet. 1:3–12*)

WEDNESDAY: **Living the Life of Salvation** (*1 Pet. 1:13–21*)

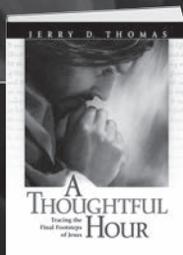
THURSDAY: **Love One Another** (*1 Pet. 1:22–25*)

Memory Text—*1 Peter 1:22*

Sabbath Gem: As we will soon see, even in the beginning few verses, Peter has a lot of important truth to reveal to us today, centuries removed from when he wrote.

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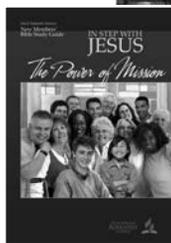
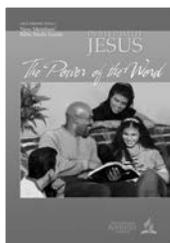
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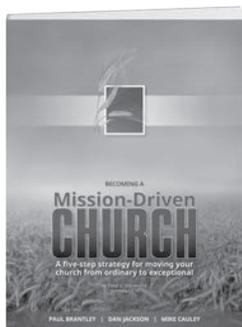
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