

Understanding the Holy Spirit

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Understanding the Holy Spirit

Lesson One: The Nature of the Holy Spirit

Scriptures for Study:

- Genesis 1:1-2, 26
- Matthew 12:22-32
- Acts 5:1-5
- Matthew 3:13-17, 28:19-20
- Romans 8:26-27
- 2 Corinthians 13:14
- John 15:26, 16:13-15
- 1 Timothy 4:1
- Ephesians 4:30
- Hebrews 10:29
- James 4:5

What Is the Holy Spirit, Anyway?

For some strange reason, it seems that the more abstract and theoretical a concept is in Scripture, the more time people spend arguing about it, and that's certainly the case with the nature of the Holy Spirit. As with many other things that we don't need to know to get to heaven, the Bible doesn't spend a great deal of time defining the nature of the Holy Spirit nor the Spirit's relationship to the Father and the Son, and it took several hundred years after the death of Jesus for the traditional doctrine of the Trinity to get hammered out.

Almost from the beginning, this doctrine came under attack. The Qur'an gives specific instructions to Muslims not to believe in or honor the Trinity, and their adherence to a unitary vision of God remains to this day. Jehovah's Witnesses deny the personality of the Holy Spirit altogether, preferring to regard Him (or It) as some kind of diffuse spiritual force.

Although the Bible does not answer all the questions we might have about the Spirit, it gives us enough information to address these divergent doctrines. Even the things that the various inspired authors wrote about the Spirit in passing are enough to set us on the road to understanding. They discuss the deity and the personality of the Spirit in enough detail to confirm those things in our minds. The unrevealed things belong to God, but the things that have been revealed give us what we need to know.

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Thirteen

Day Two

For each of the lesson numbers given below, restate the main points that the lesson makes.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

12.

Understanding the Holy Spirit

Lesson Thirteen: Review

Day One

For each of the lesson numbers given below, restate the main points that the lesson makes.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

50

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson One

Day One

1. What happens in Genesis 1:1-2? According to 1:2, who is present for this? What does this teach us about the Holy Spirit?
2. What does God say in Genesis 1:26? What pronoun is used throughout? What does this tell us about God? Why do we care?
3. What is Jesus talking about in Matthew 12:31? What is blasphemy? What does this teach us about the Holy Spirit?
4. In Acts 5:3, how does Peter describe the actions of Ananias? In 5:4, how does he describe them? What conclusion can we draw from this?

3

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson One

5. In Matthew 3:16, who is baptized? What does He see? What happens in 3:17? Why is this significant?
6. What command does Jesus give in Matthew 28:19? By whose authority were the apostles to baptize? What does this verse illustrate about the Holy Spirit?

Day Two

7. What do we see the Holy Spirit doing in Romans 8:26? Who else appears in 8:27? Revelation 2:18, 23 may help. What does this show us about the nature of the Holy Spirit?
8. What blessing does Paul pronounce in 2 Corinthians 13:14? How does this help us understand God?

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Twelve

9. How does Paul describe the reason for his actions in 7:17? Is Paul saying here that he is possessed by a little sin demon that makes him do evil? If not, what is he saying?
10. What two states of life does 8:5 describe? What result does each have? Are these two states logically parallel? If so, should we expect them to operate in similar ways? Why or why not?
11. What does 8:9 say about the Roman Christians? What causes this? How does this indwelling function? Be sure to consider 7:17 in your answer.
12. What different entities are described as indwelling us in 8:9-11? Does this mean that all these different entities literally inhabit the skull of every Christian? If not, then what other explanation makes more sense?

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Twelve

5. In 2 Timothy 1:14, who is said to indwell us? In 1:13, what idea is connected with this indwelling? In understanding this verse, why is it important to note that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit all indwell us?
6. What instruction is given in Ephesians 5:18? What instruction is given in the parallel passage in Colossians 3:16? What should we learn from this about the Spirit's dwelling in us?

Day Two

7. What is the subject of 2 John 2? What is it doing? How should we understand this? Why is it important?
8. In Romans 7:15, what does Paul want to do? What does he actually do? Does this mean that Paul had no free will? If not, what does it mean?

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson One

9. What does Jesus say the Holy Spirit will do in John 15:26? What does He say the apostles will do in John 15:27? What does "bear witness" mean? What does this reveal about the Holy Spirit?
10. List the actions carried out by the Holy Spirit in John 16:13-14. Is it possible for a non-personality to carry out these actions? What can we take from this?
11. What does Paul urge the Ephesians not to do in Ephesians 4:30? Is it possible to do this to something that does not possess a personality? Why is this significant?
12. What three actions are ascribed to the willful sinner in Hebrews 10:29? Why is this important to our study of the Holy Spirit?

Understanding the Holy Spirit

Lesson Two: Transmitting Spiritual Gifts, Part One

Scriptures for Study:

- Luke 3:15-17
- John 1:29-34
- Acts 1:4-8, 2:1-21, 10:44-48

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

In Scripture, the word “baptism” (from the Koine Greek baptizo) refers to the process of immersion or submersion. Sometimes, this is a literal immersion in water, as is most evident in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. At other times, it refers to a metaphorical immersion, contact with a medium or experience so great that it overwhelms the person. This is most evident in the many Scriptures that discuss the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit was predicted even before the ministry of Jesus began, by John the Baptist. It was promised by Jesus to His apostles immediately before His ascension. In the book of Acts, it occurs twice, each time granting miraculous spiritual gifts and signifying that a new group of people could now seek entrance into the kingdom of God.

In recent years, worshipers from the Pentecostal and charismatic communities have claimed that they too receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, not just twice in the span of several decades, but on a weekly basis, every time they come together. This claim has vast implications. If true, it would mean that both miracles and divine revelation continue to this day, which would transform the practice of Christianity as we know it. The only way for us to assess the validity of such claims is to return to the word, to study the genuine occurrences of the baptism of the Holy Spirit so that we can compare the “baptisms” of today to the divine pattern.

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Twelve

Day One

1. According to 2 Corinthians 6:16, what promise is made to Christians? In 6:17, what must we do to attain that promise? Does this text speak of a literal indwelling of the Father, or a metaphorical indwelling? Why?
2. In John 14:10, whom does Jesus say indwells Him? In this same verse, what does Jesus say the opposite of this indwelling would be? What does this teach us about indwelling?
3. In Ephesians 3:17, who is said to dwell in us? How? According to 3:16, what makes this possible? Is this a literal indwelling, or a metaphorical indwelling? Why?
4. What relationship does Jesus describe in John 15:4? How does He slightly rephrase this concept in John 15:7? What do we learn from this?

Understanding the Holy Spirit

Lesson Twelve: The Indwelling of the Spirit, Part Two

Scriptures for Study:

- John 14:10, 15:4, 7
- 2 Corinthians 6:16-17
- Ephesians 3:16-17, 5:18
- Colossians 3:16
- 2 Timothy 1:14

- Romans 7:15, 17, 8:5, 9-11

Context, Part Two

Just as we must take into account the social and historical context in which a book of the Bible was written, so too, when we consider a verse, we must look at the textual context of that verse. If we fail to do so, it's easy for us to reach wrong conclusions about some of the most important passages of Scripture.

For instance, when the Philippian jailer asks Paul what he must do to be saved in Acts 16:30, we must understand the context before we can appreciate Paul's reply in the next verse. Paul tells him that he must believe to be saved not because belief by itself is sufficient for salvation, but because the jailer had never heard the gospel and needed to believe before he could progress further in God's plan.

Similarly, we must pay attention to context as we study the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. These days, it's easy to open a computer Bible and in a matter of minutes, print out all the Scriptures that contain both "Spirit" and "dwell". That kind of broad-ranging study can be valuable, but it can also be dangerous. If we only consider proof texts without context, we are likely to make mistakes in our interpretation.

The only cure for this is to pay attention not just to a passage, but to what's around it. Only this kind of methodical study can lead us to truth.

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Two

Day One

1. How does John describe himself in Luke 3:16? What does he predict? What will the Coming One do? Does this mean that the Coming One would discourage water baptism? Consider John 4:1-2 in your answer. Why is this important?
2. In Luke 3:16, should we understand the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the baptism of fire as the same thing? What does 3:17 teach us about the baptism of fire? What, then, is true of people who pray for "the baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire"?
3. What does John reveal about the Expected One in John 1:29-30? How does he describe the purpose of his baptism in 1:31? How does this help us understand the baptism of the Holy Spirit too?
4. What does John say happened in 1:32? How does 1:33 explain the significance of this? At this point, does Jesus have any further need to receive the Holy Spirit?

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Two

5. What does Jesus command His apostles to do in Acts 1:4? According to 1:5, of what does this promise consist? When is this going to take place? What do we learn from this about the baptism of the Holy Spirit?
6. What promise does Jesus make in 1:8? Does this refer to the same event as 1:5, or to a different event? Why? According to 1:8, what will this enable the apostles to do? What does this show about the purpose of the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

Day Two

7. Who is the “they” in Acts 2:1? How do we know? Why is this important?
8. What happens in 2:2-3? In 2:4, what result does this have? How does this event relate back to the promise of Jesus in 1:5, 8?

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Eleven

9. What does Paul say the church is being built into in 2:22? What does this mean? Why? Be sure to consider 1 Kings 8:27-30 in your answer.
10. How does Peter describe us in 1 Peter 2:4? According to 2:5, what is God doing with us? What is the purpose of this construction? How does this fit in with the use of temple language elsewhere in Scripture?
11. What two joinings are discussed in 1 Corinthians 6:16-17? What are the consequences of each joining? What does Paul reveal in 6:19? What is the connection between these two ideas? What’s Paul’s point?
12. What is Paul saying in 3:16? Is this talking about individual Christians, or an assembly of Christians? How can we tell? What does it all mean? Why is this important?

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Eleven

5. According to 8:30, where is God's literal dwelling place? How should this shape our understanding of indwelling in Scripture?
6. In 2 Chronicles 7:1-2, what happens as Solomon finishes his prayer? Did this mean that God literally indwelt the temple at that point? Why? Why is this important?

Day Two

7. What does Ephesians 2:18 say we have through Christ? What metaphor is next used in 2:19-22? Does Paul abruptly switch topics here, or is he talking about the same thing in another way? Why?
8. What building is described in 2:19-21? What are its components? Is there an Old Testament counterpart to this building? If so, what? Why is this important?

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Two

9. What claim does Peter make about this event in 2:16? According to 2:17-18, what does the prophecy predict? According to 2:21, what is this outpouring going to signify? How does this help us further understand the baptism of the Holy Spirit?
10. What is Peter doing in 10:44? What happens during this? How does this occurrence relate back to 2:17-18?
11. What group is mentioned in 10:45? How do they react? Why? According to 10:46, how do they know what has occurred? What does Peter do in 10:46-47? How does this relate back to 2:21?
12. What happens in 10:48? When was the household of Cornelius saved, when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them or when they were baptized? Consider passages like Acts 22:16 and 1 Peter 3:21 in your answer. Why is this significant?

Understanding the Holy Spirit

Lesson Three: Transmitting Spiritual Gifts, Part Two

Scriptures for Study:

- Acts 8:4-24, 11:15-18, 15:7-9, 19:1-6, 20:4, 21:17-19.
- Romans 1:11
- 1 Timothy 4:4
- 2 Timothy 1:6

The Laying on of Hands

The laying on of hands was an important religious element of the first-century church. Miraculous healings were commonly worked through the laying on of hands, blessings were imparted, and most importantly for our study, miraculous spiritual gifts were transmitted by the apostles.

We first see this happen in Acts 6, when the seven “deacons” were consecrated by the apostles for the work of tending the Hellenistic widows. In the next two chapters, two of those deacons, Stephen and Philip, give us ample proof that the apostles’ ability to work signs and wonders now resided with them as well. From there, the practice becomes much more common. Ordinary Christians from Samaria to Ephesus received spiritual gifts through the laying on of the apostles’ hands. Indeed, unless the baptism of the Holy Spirit was involved, any first-century Christian who received power from on high received it through the laying on of hands.

Just as is true of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, many in the modern era claim argue that the imparting of spiritual gifts through the laying on of hands continues today. Once again, this is a far-reaching claim that we must evaluate carefully. Is it significant that we only see apostles able to transmit spiritual gifts in this way? If so, who can rightly claim to be an apostle? Although it is appealing to believe that God still endows us with miraculous spiritual gifts today, that must first be confirmed by the word.

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Eleven

Day One

1. Where do we see the ark of the covenant taken in 1 Samuel 5:2? According to 5:3-5, what happens next? Does this story make it seem like the Philistines believed Dagon literally dwelt in his house? Why?
2. What does Solomon say he has done for God in 1 Kings 8:12-13? How else does he describe his actions in 8:20? At this point, does it sound like Solomon believes the same thing about God that the Philistines believed about Dagon?
3. What question does Solomon ask in 8:27? How does he answer it? What does this tell us about the difference between God and Dagon? Why is this important?
4. According to 8:28-29, what does Solomon want from God? Based on this, what does it mean to Solomon that God dwells in the temple?

Understanding the Holy Spirit

Lesson Eleven: The Indwelling of the Spirit, Part One

Scriptures for Study:

- 1 Samuel 5:1-5
- 1 Kings 8:12-13, 27-30
- 2 Chronicles 7:1-2
- 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:16-20

- Ephesians 2:18-22
- 1 Peter 2:4-5

Scripture in Its Context

When we study the Bible, one of the most difficult tasks before us is to consider it from the correct perspective. It's easy for us to consider its words and concepts from a 21st-century perspective only, without giving any thought to what those words and concepts would have meant to a first-century reader.

For example, we might tell a member of a denomination that she needs to be baptized to be saved, and point to 1 Peter 3:21 in support. She might well respond, "I don't need to do that. I've already been baptized when I was sprinkled as a small child." Her reply reveals that she doesn't understand that the word "baptism" has shifted meaning in the past 2000 years, that many things that men call baptism today do not meet the first-century definition. Only by going back to that original definition can we really understand what we must do to be saved.

The same holds true of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We can read in a number of passages that the Spirit dwells within the Christian. From that, many readers jump to the conclusion that this is a literal indwelling, that we have a supernatural inhabitant in the same way we inhabit our own houses. This conclusion is possible, but the text does not demand it. Instead, we have to put the text in its context, to figure out how the first-century authors understood indwelling, to learn what it means for us.

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Three

Day One

1. In Acts 11:15, what does Peter say happened? In 11:16, to what does he relate this? What can we learn from Peter's reasoning here?
2. What rhetorical question does Peter ask in 11:17? If Peter had "stood in God's way", what would he not have done? How do the Jews react to Peter's words in 11:18? What does this show us about the purpose of the baptism of the Holy Spirit?
3. Acts 15:7-8 lists three consecutive actions of God. What are they? How do they line up chronologically with 10:44-48? Why is this significant?
4. What is Philip doing in 8:5? According to 8:12, how do many of the people react to this? After doing this, what is the spiritual condition of those people? Why is this important?

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Three

5. In 8:14, how does the Jerusalem church react to the news about Philip's work? What do Peter and John do in 8:15? According to 8:16, why was this necessary? What does this tell us about the connection between water baptism and spiritual gifts?
6. What do the apostles do in 8:17? What result does this have? What does it illustrate about the difference between the apostles and Philip? Acts 6:5-6 may help to reveal Philip's identity. Why is this important?

Day Two

7. What happens to Paul in Acts 19:1? How does 19:2-3 describe the spiritual understanding of these men? How does Paul react to this situation in 19:4? How is his reaction telling?
8. According to 19:5, how do these men respond to the gospel? In 19:6, what does Paul do? What result does this have? How does this fit in with what we've seen already?

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Ten

9. What does Jesus promise the apostles in John 14:26? What will the Holy Spirit do for them? Do those who claim to be gifted today have perfect recollection of the teaching of Jesus? What does this show?
10. What does the Sanhedrin say about Peter's healing of the lame man in Acts 4:16? Can the opponents of Pentecostalism today plausibly deny the "miracles" that Pentecostals work? What does this establish?
11. What test for prophets does Moses propose in Deuteronomy 18:22? Are there any "prophets" today who have a perfect record of predicting the future? What does this prove?
12. In 1 Corinthians 14:27-31, what rules does Paul set up for speaking and tongues and prophesying in the assembly? According to 14:32, why is this possible? Are charismatic assemblies today commonly this orderly? What can we learn from this?

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Ten

5. In Acts 11:15, how does Peter describe what happened to the household of Cornelius? Was this something that commonly happened in the first-century church?
6. According to Acts 8:17-18, who could transmit spiritual gifts by the laying on of hands? What does 1:22 tell us about what it took to be an apostle? What does this mean for passing on spiritual gifts in this way today?

Day Two

7. What test does Jesus propose in John 10:37-38? Is it fair to apply this test to men today? Why or why not? How can we know what the works of the Father are?
8. What does Acts 2:5-11 reveal about the tongues given by the first-century spiritual gift? Do “tongue-speakers” today speak foreign languages they have not learned? Do they pass the John 10:37-38 test?

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Thre

9. What does Paul say about his prayers in Romans 1:9-10? According to 1:11, what does he want to do? How does this line up with what we’ve seen already about the transmission of spiritual gifts?
10. Where is Paul going in Acts 20:3? According to 20:4, who’s going with him? Whom does this group of travelers encounter in 21:17-18? What is true of these elders?
11. What does Paul urge Timothy to do in 1 Timothy 4:14? According to the passage, how did Timothy get this gift? When did this likely happen? Why is this important?
12. What does Paul urge Timothy to do in 2 Timothy 1:6? How did Timothy get this gift? What should we take from this account?

Understanding the Holy Spirit

Lesson Four: The Nature of Spiritual Gifts

Scriptures for Study:

- Acts 2:4-13, 3:1-10, 13:8-11, 21:10-11
- 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 14:27-28
- Luke 1:26-35, 2:25-32

- Acts 8:26-29, 10:17-23, 13:1-4, 16:6-7, 20:22-23

What Miracles Were Like

Today, we often idly think that it would be useful if we were able to work miracles today, so that if we were in a Bible study with an unbeliever, we could prove our point by healing a sick friend or raising a loved one from the dead. In this, though, we fail to appreciate the difficulties the apostles and prophets faced. Unlike us, they didn't have a book of revelation about Jesus that most people accepted as being the word of God. Instead, they had to convince the Mediterranean world that a Jewish artisan who had been crucified by the Romans as a common criminal was still alive and not only that, but also the Savior of the world.

As messages go, that's a tough sell. In a cosmopolitan world just as cynical as our own, the apostles needed something special to get their audiences to listen. They got that something special through the miraculous spiritual gifts. Through God, the early Christians could do things that were clearly beyond the grasp of any other man. Unlettered Galileans could speak in dozens of foreign languages, make a man who had been lame from birth able to leap for joy, predict the future, and display many other wonders besides. This was the kind of power they needed to get others to believe.

We should learn two things from this: an appreciation of the greatness of God and a sense of what genuine miracles look like. Anyone who claims the apostles powers should be able to do the apostles' works too.

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Ten

Day One

1. What does Jude 3 reveal about "the faith"? What does this mean? What does it imply about prophets and the spiritual gift of prophecy?
2. In John 20:30, does John claim to have recorded all the signs Jesus did? According to 20:31, why did he choose to record some signs? If this record is enough to produce belief on its own, is there any further need for miraculous confirmation? Why is this important?
3. What does Paul reveal about spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 13:8? According to 13:9, when will this take place? What is he talking about? How do we know? How does this fit in with the previous Scriptures in this lesson?
4. What prophecy do we see recorded in Acts 2:17? What does "all mankind" mean here? How do we know? How was this prophecy fulfilled? Should we expect the baptism of the Holy Spirit today? Ephesians 4:5 may shed some light on the answer.

Understanding the Holy Spirit

Lesson Ten: The Duration of Spiritual Gifts

Scriptures for Study:

- John 20:30-31
- Acts 2:17, 8:17-18, 11:15
- 1 Corinthians 13:8-12
- Ephesians 4:5
- Jude 3

- Deuteronomy 18:22
- John 10:37-38, 14:26
- Acts 2:5-11, 4:16
- 1 Corinthians 14:27-32

The Spectacular Miracle

One of the most amazing statements in all of Scripture appears in Acts 4:16. Peter and John have just healed the lame man who begged before the gates of the temple, and the Sanhedrin concludes, "For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it." This is remarkable for two reasons. First, even though the Sanhedrin acknowledged that a miracle had been worked in the name of Jesus, they refused to believe in Him. Second, the sign Peter performed was so spectacular, so incontestable, that even the worst enemies of the gospel did not dare dispute it.

That is what miracles in the first century were like. They were so in-your-face supernatural, so patently impossible without divine aid, that they were undeniable. That's why the Scripture calls them signs. Just like a highway sign might tell us, "Take this exit to get to Springfield," the signs worked by the apostles declared, "Listen to this man to get to God."

Despite the thousands of self-proclaimed miracle workers roving through the country today, not a single one of them has worked a miracle to the apostolic standard. There have been no spectacular, incontestable miracles since the days of the early church, no signs that point us to a new prophet. We don't need to get involved in the disputes about various miracles. The fact that they are disputable proves that they aren't from God.

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Four

Day One

1. What spiritual gifts do we find listed in 1 Corinthians 12:7-10? Within this list, what larger categories are apparent?
2. Whom do we meet in Acts 13:8? What is he doing? What happens to him in 13:9-11? What spiritual gift does this represent? Could this incident have been faked? Why or why not?
3. Who appears in 3:2? What happens to him in 3:6-8? What spiritual gift do we see at work here? Could his healing have been faked? Why or why not?
4. What Christian do we encounter in 21:10? What does he do in 21:11? What spiritual gift does he display? Was he faking this? How do we know?

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Four

5. What happens to the apostles in 2:4? What does this lead them to do? According to 2:6-11, what do these tongues consist of? What spiritual gift is at work here? Could this have been faked? Why or why not?
6. What command does Paul give in 1 Corinthians 14:27? What alternative does he offer in 14:28? What gift is under discussion here? Could this gift have been faked? Consider the previous question in your answer.

Day Two

7. What is Mary promised in Luke 1:30-33? What question does she ask in 1:34? How is she answered in 1:35? How does this help us to understand the work of the Holy Spirit?
8. Whom do we meet in 2:25? What is he like? What does the Holy Spirit do in 2:27? What does Simeon then do in 2:28-32? What can we learn from this about being directly led by the Spirit?

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Nine

9. Based on the above discussion, can all Christians expect to have the Spirit in their hearts as a guarantee, or only Christians who have received miraculous spiritual gifts? Why?
10. Whom do we meet in Acts 3:2? How widely known is his condition? How do we know this? Why would it make him a good candidate for miraculous healing by Peter?
11. What does Peter do for the lame man in 3:4-7? According to 3:9-10, how do the people react? Why?
12. What do the people do in 3:11? According to 3:12, how does Peter use this opportunity? What do we learn from 4:4 about the results of Peter's words? How does this story illustrate the pattern of Hebrews 2:3-4?

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Nine

5. According to Hebrews 2:3, who first declared the message of salvation? Then, who took it up? In 2:4, how did God bear witness along with them? How does this fit with the other passages we've discussed in this lesson?
6. What are the apostles described as doing in Mark 16:20? What does Jesus do? Is this another way of saying the same thing we've been studying all lesson? Why or why not?

Day Two

7. What does Paul reveal in 2 Corinthians 5:5 about an action of God? According to 1:22, where does this gift occur? Why is this significant?
8. Various translations describe the Spirit in 5:5 as an earnest, a deposit, a down payment, or a guarantee. How do these ideas relate back to the concept of evidence that we've been studying? What must the Spirit in the heart do to provide this kind of evidence? Why is this important?

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Four

9. What does Paul do in Acts 16:6? Why? What does he want to do in 16:7? What actually happened? What does this teach us about the role of the Holy Spirit in the work of the apostles?
10. What does the Holy Spirit do in 8:29? Did Philip have miraculous spiritual gifts? Judging from this episode, who could expect to have the Holy Spirit guide them in this way?
11. What is Peter doing in 10:19? What happens in 10:19-21? Why would Peter receive this kind of instruction? Why is this important?
12. What does Paul say he is doing in 20:22? Why? What has the Holy Spirit been doing, according to 20:23? How does this fit the pattern we've already seen?

Understanding the Holy Spirit

Lesson Five: The Spirit and Inspiration

Scriptures for Study:

- John 3:34-35, 11:45-53
- Acts 1:16
- Hebrews 9:6-8
- 1 Peter 1:10-12
- 2 Peter 1:21

- Matthew 10:17-20
- John 14:25-26, 16:12-14
- Acts 15:28-29
- 1 Corinthians 2:10-14
- Ephesians 3:3-5

Where the Bible Comes From

In the first century, the servants of God did all sorts of amazing and miraculous things, from casting out demons to cursing the enemies of the faith. However, perhaps their greatest work is the one whose effects are still with us today, a work, in fact, that we can hold in our hands and carry to church. The word of God displays the power of God every bit as clearly as did the resurrected form of the disciple Tabitha.

Just as only the chosen of God could heal men's bodies, only the gospel of God can heal men's souls. Only through the word and those who proclaim it can we learn of Jesus, His love for us, and the salvation from our sins that is available through His blood. This is the most important message that has ever been and ever can be. If it is corrupted or lost, the human race is doomed, so it makes sense that God took great care with its transmission and preservation.

So that the Scripture would convey precisely what He wanted, God did not entrust it to the human paraphrases of the followers of Jesus. Instead, He sent His Holy Spirit to enlighten their minds and guide their pens, so that every word of the gospel message is precisely as God would have it. The Bible is so well crafted that any person of average understanding can pick it up, read it, and grasp its meaning. Without the word, we would be lost, but with it, we can know for certain what we must do to be saved.

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Nine

Day One

1. What does Deuteronomy 19:15 say is insufficient evidence in a legal proceeding? Instead, what is required? Why is this a logical rule to follow?
2. In connection with this, what does Jesus say in John 5:31? According to 5:36, what was one of the additional witnesses to Jesus? How did they serve as a witness?
3. In 10:37, how does Jesus say the Jews should react to Him if He isn't doing the Father's works? According to 10:38, how should they treat Him if He is doing the Father's works? Is this a useful standard for us today? Why?
4. Whom does Jesus promise He would send the apostles in 15:26? What would this Helper do? According to 15:27, how would the apostles contribute to this work? Why is this important?

Understanding the Holy Spirit

Lesson Nine: The Confirmation of the Word

Scriptures for Study:

- Deuteronomy 19:15
- Mark 16:20
- John 5:31, 36, 10:37-38, 15:26-27
- Hebrews 2:3-4

- Acts 3:1-4:4
- 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, 5:5

The Purpose of Spiritual Gifts

In Isaiah 55:11, God declares of His word, "It shall not return to Me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it." This text defines nothing less than God's plan for interacting with mankind. God's word tells us of His expectations for our lives, of the punishment we incur when we violate those expectations, and of the Savior who will rescue us from that punishment if we call upon His name. God's purpose was always that we should be saved through the gospel.

It is in this light that we must understand the miraculous spiritual gifts. They weren't just neat toys that God gave His people to play with. They didn't exist for their own sake. Instead, they existed for the sake of the word. To make a football analogy, the spiritual gifts never carried the ball for God. Instead, the gifts were just the offensive linemen. They cleared obstacles and objections out of the way so that the word could accomplish its purpose.

Today, the touchdown has already been scored. The word and its record of confirming miracles already provide enough evidence to persuade the honest heart. This leaves those who affirm modern-day spiritual gifts with a logical problem. If those gifts continue today, they must still carry on their ancient work: confirming a new revelation. If another gospel is being proclaimed today, where does that leave the gospel of Christ?

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Five

Day One

1. What statement does Peter make in 2 Peter 1:21? What does this mean? Why is it important to our system of faith?
2. How are the prophets of the Old Testament described in 1 Peter 1:10? According to 1:11, what provoked them to do this? According to 1:12, what did they learn? What does this tell us about the nature and purpose of Old Testament revelation?
3. Who is speaking in Acts 1:15? What does he reveal about Judas in 1:16? How is the process of revelation described here? Why is this significant?
4. What difference between the two sections of the tabernacle is described in Hebrews 9:6-7? According to 9:8, why did this difference exist? What does this tell us about the alternate means of revelation used by the Holy Spirit?

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Five

5. What claim does Jesus make about Himself in John 3:34? What made this possible? What does it tell us about the words of Jesus? Why is this important?
6. In 11:47-48, what's happening? What does the high priest Caiaphas say about this in 11:49-50? According to 11:51, what moved him to say that? What does this tell us about the connection between spiritual giftedness and salvation?

Day Two

7. In Matthew 10:17-18, what does Jesus say will happen to the apostles? According to 10:19, how should the apostles react when this happens? How does 10:19-20 explain why they should react this way? How does this help us understand the words of the apostles?
8. In John 14:25, what does Jesus say has been happening? According to 14:26, what will happen? To whom is this promise made? How can we tell? Why is this significant?

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Eight

9. 1 John 2:4-5 describes two kinds of people. What does the first do? What does John say about him? What does the second do? What does John say about him? How does the word perfect God's love in us today?
10. What does Paul say about our hope in Romans 5:5? Why is this true? Does this demand that the Holy Spirit operates directly to make us love? Why or why not?
11. What does Paul want Timothy to do in 1 Timothy 4:6? What will this prove Timothy to be? What will this show that he is with respect to the words of faith and doctrine? How do we follow the word?
12. What statement does Paul make in Romans 8:14? How is this true? Why?

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Eight

5. What does Paul reveal about the writings of the Old Testament in Romans 15:4? What does he want us to gain from them as we study them? How does this work?
6. What does Paul pray for in 15:13? What result does he hope to see? Judging from the previous discussion, how will God accomplish this work? Why?

Day Two

7. Whom do we meet in Acts 15:32? What role do they have? What do they do? How do we gain strength from the word today?
8. What does Paul describe himself as doing in Ephesians 3:14-15? What does he ask God to do for the Ephesians in 3:16? Can we expect to receive this blessing today? How? Why is this important?

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Five

9. In John 16:12, what problem does Jesus present? What solution to this problem does He predict in John 16:13? Once this process is finished, will the apostles be lacking in any spiritual understanding? Why is this important?
10. What requirements are laid on Gentile Christians in Acts 15:29? According to 15:28, why were these requirements imposed? How is this important in understanding the words of the apostles?
11. What does Paul say he has received in 1 Corinthians 2:12? What is the result of this gift? According to 2:13, what will Paul use to transmit this understanding to others? Why is this relevant to our understanding of Scripture?
12. Describe the process of revelation outlined in Ephesians 3:3-5. According to 3:4, when we read what Paul has written, what can we do? Why is this important?

Understanding the Holy Spirit

Lesson Six: The Spirit and Salvation, Part One

Scriptures for Study:

- John 3:5
- Romans 8:15-16
- Ephesians 5:25
- 1 Peter 1:23
- 1 John 5:6-8

- John 17:17
- Romans 12:1-2
- 1 Corinthians 6:9-11
- Ephesians 1:13
- 2 Timothy 2:19
- Titus 3:5-6

The Word of His Grace

For hundreds if not thousands of years, there has been considerable confusion about the role that the Holy Spirit plays in salvation. That He has a role in salvation is undeniable. It is confirmed by a dozen or more passages. However, that tells us nothing about the way that He accomplishes this work, and that's where a lot of people have gone off the rails.

Most notable in this respect are the Swiss theologian John Calvin and his followers. Calvin taught that we are utterly depraved, incapable of saving ourselves, incapable, in fact, of even understanding the word. For us to be saved, the Holy Spirit must operate directly on our hearts, "zapping" us with salvation and bringing us to Christ, whether we want to go or not.

As reassuring as this explanation may be to those who believe they are numbered with the zapped, it overlooks the possibility that the Holy Spirit could work for our salvation indirectly. When I cut down a tree, I don't use my fingernails. I use a saw, the tool that I believe is best adapted for my purpose. In the same way, it may well be that the Spirit accomplishes our salvation indirectly, through the use of the tool of the word.

When we study the passages about the Spirit and salvation, this is the question we must keep in mind: do they demand supernatural direct operation, or can they logically be understood to speak only of the word?

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Eight

Day One

1. What are elders instructed to do in Titus 1:9? What two things will this enable them to do? Is this something that only elders can do? Why is this important?
2. According to John 16:8, what will the Holy Spirit do? Does this refer to some direct operation of the Holy Spirit, or to the Holy Spirit's work through the word? Why? Refer to the previous question in your answer.
3. What does Paul reveal in 1 Thessalonians 4:17? According to 4:18, what does he want the Thessalonians to do with this information? Are we still comforted by this today? What are some other ways that we are comforted by the word?
4. In Acts 9:31, how is the church described? In what two things is it walking? Was this comfort the result of some supernatural intervention, or did it come from something else? Explain your answer.

Understanding the Holy Spirit

Lesson Eight: Other Works of the Holy Spirit

Scriptures for Study:

- John 16:8
- Acts 9:31
- Romans 15:4, 13
- 1 Thessalonians 4:18
- Titus 1:9

- Acts 15:32
- Romans 5:5, 8:14
- Ephesians 3:16
- 1 Timothy 4:6
- 1 John 2:5

Led by the Spirit?

In the historical record of the New Testament, there are several instances of the Holy Spirit prompting disciples either to do or not to do certain things. They might be led into a certain building at a certain time, or forbidden to travel to a certain province. The reasoning behind these supernatural interventions is rarely explained, but it had a large impact on the ministry of Paul and others.

Today, many self-described Christians across a wide spectrum of the denominational world believe in a modern-day leading of the Spirit. Some of them claim that He speaks to them in their hearts; others describe a feeling or prompting that they should do certain things. Such intervention has been described in nearly every area of human activity. Numerous believers justify their choice of spouse by claiming that the Spirit provoked them to marry them. Still others speak of the Spirit warning them away from a bad business deal, guiding them to a particular church, or even giving them the feeling that they have been saved.

If indeed the Spirit guides believers in this way today, it would be an invaluable help in our lives. If not, and these people are deluding themselves, the delusion can easily bring physical and spiritual disaster. As always, we must examine the record of the first century to determine whether modern reports align with the Biblical pattern.

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Six

Day One

1. What does Ephesians 5:25-26 reveal about the church? When Paul talks about “the washing of water with the word”, to what is he referring? What does this tell us about salvation today?
2. What does 1 Peter 1:23 tell us about our birth as Christians? How does this work? How does this passage further clarify Ephesians 5:25-26?
3. What does Jesus tell us about salvation in John 3:5? In light of the previous two questions, what does He mean? Why is this important?
4. According to 1 John 5:7-8, what are the three earthly witnesses to salvation? According to 1 John 5:6, how does the Spirit serve as a witness? How are we to understand this? How does it fit in with the Scriptures we’ve already looked at in this lesson?

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Six

5. In Romans 8:15, some translations read “a spirit of adoption as sons, by which. . .”, while others read “the Spirit of adoption, by whom. . .”. When we consider the context, which appears to more accurately convey the meaning of the text? Why? 2 Timothy 1:6-7 may help.
6. What does Romans 8:16 say? Based on the other passages in this lesson, what does this mean? In practice, how does this work?

Day Two

7. What does Paul reveal in 2 Timothy 2:19? What seal does this foundation have? 2000 years ago, what was the function of a seal? How does this actually happen?
8. In Ephesians 1:13, what does Paul say the Ephesians have done? What has been done to them? Taking the previous question into consideration, what does this mean?

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Seven

9. According to 2:33, what two things happened to Jesus? Is “the promise of the Holy Spirit” here the promise of the Spirit Himself, or the promise made by the Spirit? Why? Refer to the previous discussion in your answer.
10. According to 2:36, what has God done for Jesus? How does this relate to 2:21? When the people cry out in 2:37, what do they want? Why is this important?
11. How does Peter answer the people in 2:38? What will they receive if they do? Is this the gift of the Spirit Himself, or the gift of salvation promised by the Spirit? Why? Be sure to consider Acts 2:21 in your answer.
12. What does Peter tell the people in Acts 2:39? What promise is he referring to? How do we know?

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Seven

5. What does 3:26 say that we are? What mental state produces this result? According to 3:27, when do we enter this new relationship? How does this further explain 3:14?
6. In 3:29, what two things does Paul say are true of us if we are Christ's? What promise? Who made the promise?

Day Two

7. As cited in Acts 2:17-18, what does Joel predict? According to 2:21, what will these signs indicate? Was Joel speaking on his own initiative here? Who was really doing the speaking? When was this prophecy fulfilled?
8. What is David cited as predicting in 2:25-28? Is David speaking on his own initiative? Who is the real speaker here? In whom was this prophecy fulfilled?

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Six

9. What does Jesus ask for in John 17:17? How does He look for this to be accomplished? How does this happen in our lives?
10. In 1 Corinthians 6:11, what does Paul reveal about the previous state of some of the Corinthians? What happened to them? How did this happen? Be sure to refer to the previous discussion in your answer.
11. What does Paul tell us not to do in Romans 12:2? What does he tell us to do? How do we accomplish this? Colossians 3:9-10 may help you in your answer.
12. What does Paul say God has done in Titus 3:5? How did He achieve this? What does this mean? As always, consider the preceding discussion in your answer. How does Titus 3:6 change our reading of the text?

Understanding the Holy Spirit

Lesson Seven: The Spirit and Salvation, Part Two

Scriptures for Study:

- Galatians 3:7-9, 13-14, 26-29
- 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15
- Acts 2:14-39

The Gift of the Holy Spirit

In both modern English and Koine Greek, there is an ambiguity inherent in the phrase “the gift of”. When we speak of “the gift of”, we could mean either that it is a gift given by someone to us, or a gift of something that we now possess. Sometimes, the meaning is clear. For example, if I were to say that I appreciated the gift of my mother, no one would conclude that I got Mom for a Christmas present. Conversely, when I talk about receiving the gift of a book, nobody’s going to think that the paperback over on the shelf decided to give me something nice.

Things aren’t so easy, though, when we examine the Biblical phrase, “the gift of the Holy Spirit”. It is logically possible for that gift to be the Holy Spirit Himself. In fact, Luke uses that meaning in Acts 10:45. However, it is equally logical and equally possible for the phrase to refer to a gift that the Holy Spirit gives or promises. Among other places, 1 Corinthians 12:7-8 discusses gifts given through the Holy Spirit.

This distinction has a huge impact on the way we understand one of the most important passages in the Bible: Acts 2:38. When Peter promises the Jews that if they repent and are baptized, they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, what is he promising, that the Holy Spirit will inhabit them personally, or that they will receive another gift that the Holy Spirit has promised? Only a careful study of the context will reveal the truth.

Understanding the Holy Spirit: Lesson Seven

Day One

1. What does Paul say God did in 2 Thessalonians 2:13? How did He accomplish this? How does Paul restate this in 2:14? What do we learn from this?
2. What conclusion does Paul draw from this in 2:15? What does this mean? How we can ensure that the Holy Spirit works in us today?
3. What two things does Paul say “the Scripture” did in Galatians 3:8? What was the message preached? Who was the real preacher here? How was this prophecy fulfilled?
4. According to 3:14, what did Jesus achieve? What result did this have? Does this text refer to the promise of the Holy Spirit Himself, or to a promise made by the Holy Spirit? Consider the previous question in your answer.