COGMA

Church of God Mission Academy

STUDY GUIDE 44

1 OF 5

The Gifts & Offices in the New Testament

STUDY GUIDE 1 OF 5:

The Indwelling Christ

An overview of Christ dwelling within every born-again believer.



Equipping and empowering for effective service

2 Timothy 2:2

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE STUDENT

My Study Plan

Preparing a Study Plan before starting this Study Guide will assist you in completing it within a designated timeframe. It also helps in developing the discipline required for studying God's Word effectively.

Proverbs 16:3:

> *Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.*

My Study Guide Journal

Keep a record as you progress through your Study Guide, including the Personal Responses for each section, for future reference and goal setting.

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Important Points

- COGMA does not claim to be infallible or the authority.
- Infallibility and authority belong only to God and His Word.

COGMA therefore strongly advises that you prayerfully study the content of each Study Guide with the heart of a Berean (**Acts 17:10–12**).

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PREFACE

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The Holy Spirit is essential to the life and operation of the New Testament Church. Jesus Christ does not leave His people to serve Him through their own strength, wisdom or natural ability. He dwells within every born-again believer as Spirit, and His indwelling life is the source of spiritual life, understanding, service and ministry.

The Holy Spirit is not another divine Person separate from Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ, and Scripture declares that *"the Lord is that Spirit."* Jesus promised that He would come to His disciples, and that promise was fulfilled at Pentecost in A.D. 31 when He came as the Holy Spirit to dwell within His people. Every person who is truly born again has received the Spirit of Christ.

Paul wrote in **Romans 8:9**:

> *"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."*

The believer therefore does not receive Christ at salvation and then wait for another Spirit at a later time. At the new birth, the believer receives Jesus Christ, receives the Holy Spirit and is brought by one Spirit into the one body of Christ. Salvation is complete in Him.

This truth is especially important when studying spiritual gifts and offices. Spiritual gifts must never be separated from the One who gives and operates them. They are not independent powers possessed by individuals for personal importance, recognition or control. They are operations of the one Spirit through the members of Christ's body for the good of the whole body.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:4-7**:

> *"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."*

These verses establish an important foundation for this module. There are different gifts, different areas of service and different operations, but there is one Spirit working through the body. The emphasis is therefore not upon the importance of the person who exercises a gift, but upon Jesus Christ working through His people for the edification of His Church.

Before considering individual gifts and offices, we must understand the Holy Spirit Himself and how He works within His people. We must also know how Scripture teaches us to discern the Spirit of truth from false spiritual claims. Spiritual experiences, signs or impressive manifestations must never replace the authority of the Word of God.

This Study Guide will therefore begin with the Holy Spirit throughout Scripture. It will then consider the Spirit of God as the Spirit of Christ, the promise of the Comforter, Pentecost, the new birth, the indwelling Spirit, His direction of believers and the need for spiritual discernment. From that foundation, the module will move naturally into the gifts and offices through which the one Spirit works within the one body.

The Holy Spirit is not separate from Jesus Christ. He is Jesus Christ dwelling and working within His born-again people as Spirit.

Personal Response

Key Truth

What does it mean that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus Christ?

Personal Reflection

Have you ever thought of the Holy Spirit as someone separate from Jesus Christ? What needs to change in your understanding?

Action Step

Read **Romans 8:9** *and* **2 Corinthians 3:17**. *Identify one belief about the Holy Spirit that needs correcting and explain how this draws you nearer to Jesus Christ.*

INTRODUCTION

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The New Testament Church cannot be understood apart from the Holy Spirit. The Church is not sustained by human organisation, natural ability or religious effort. Jesus Christ is its Head, and He personally dwells within His born-again people as Spirit.

The Christian life therefore begins with the inward work of God. A person is born of the Spirit, receives the Spirit of Christ and is brought into the one body of Christ. From that point, spiritual life and service flow from the presence of Jesus Christ within.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:13**:

> *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."*

The same Spirit who brings believers into the one body also works through the members of that body. Spiritual gifts and ministries must therefore never be separated from the indwelling life of Christ. The believer does not receive an independent spiritual power to possess or control. The one Spirit works through different members according to His purpose.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:4-6**:

> *"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all."*

There are different gifts, areas of service and operations, but the source is one. The Spirit of God does not divide the Church into competing spiritual classes. He works through the members of one body under the headship of Jesus Christ.

Spiritual service therefore cannot be understood as natural human ability strengthened by religion. Neither can it be understood as believers trying to copy the works of Jesus from the outside. Jesus Christ dwells within His people, and His life is expressed through them as they yield to His direction and serve according to the ability and gift God has given.

The Holy Spirit also teaches, guides and directs the believer. Jesus promised that the Comforter would teach His disciples and bring His words to their remembrance. The Spirit does not lead independently of Jesus Christ or contrary to the Word of God. The Spirit of truth always agrees with the truth already revealed in Scripture.

This makes spiritual discernment essential. Not every spiritual claim, manifestation or religious experience comes from God. Scripture instructs believers to test what they hear and experience rather than accept something simply because it appears supernatural.

John wrote in **1 John 4:1**:

> *"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."*

Before studying individual gifts and offices, we must therefore establish who the Holy Spirit is, how He dwells within the believer and how He works through the Church. This foundation protects us from separating spiritual gifts from Jesus Christ, seeking another Spirit after the new birth, or treating supernatural activity as proof that something is from God.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ dwelling within His people. From His indwelling presence flow spiritual life, understanding, direction and service, together with the gifts through which He works for the edification of His body.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does Christ dwelling in His people change the way we understand the Holy Spirit?

Personal Reflection

In what ordinary situation have you lived as though Jesus were far away, rather than dwelling within you?

Action Step

Identify that situation and explain how you will respond differently, trusting the life of Christ already within you rather than relying only on yourself.

THE HOLY SPIRIT THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE

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The Holy Spirit did not first appear on the Day of Pentecost. From the opening chapter of the Bible, Scripture reveals the Spirit of God active in creation, giving life, directing His servants and accomplishing the purpose of God. The New Testament gives greater clarity concerning the indwelling Spirit, but it is the same Spirit of the one God working throughout Scripture.

The Spirit of God in Creation

The first reference to the Spirit of God appears at the beginning of creation. Before mankind existed and before Israel became a nation, the Spirit of God was already present and active.

Moses wrote in **Genesis 1:1-2**:

> *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."*

The Spirit mentioned here is not presented as another God or as a separate source of divine power. Scripture says that God created the heaven and the earth and then describes *"the Spirit of God"* moving upon the waters. From the beginning, the Spirit is identified with God Himself and His activity. The book of Job also connects the Spirit of God with life.

Elihu said in **Job 33:4**:

> *"The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life."*

The expressions *"Spirit of God"* and *"breath of the Almighty"* direct our attention to God as the source of life. The Spirit is not independent of God. He is God's own Spirit at work.

This provides an important foundation for everything that follows. When Scripture later speaks of the Spirit leading, teaching, empowering or speaking, we are reading about God working through His own Spirit.

The Spirit Working Through God's Servants

Throughout the Old Testament, the Spirit of God worked upon individuals whom God appointed for particular purposes. Leaders, judges, kings and prophets were enabled to fulfil responsibilities God had placed before them. The emphasis was always upon God as the source of the work. When Moses carried the responsibility of leading Israel, God appointed seventy elders to assist him.

Moses recorded in **Numbers 11:25**:

> *"And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease."*

These men were not operating simply through natural leadership ability. God equipped them for the work He had given them. This principle becomes especially important when we later consider spiritual gifts and offices in the Church: service that comes from God must depend upon God rather than upon human ability alone.

The same truth can be seen in the judges of Israel. When God used Samson against the Philistines, Scripture identified the source of his unusual strength as the Spirit of the LORD.

The writer of Judges recorded in **Judges 14:6**:

> *"And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done."*

David also experienced the Spirit of the LORD in connection with the work to which God had appointed him. Samuel recorded in **1 Samuel 16:13**:

> *"Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah."*

These accounts show that the Spirit of God was actively working long before Pentecost. God equipped people according to His purpose, and their ability to accomplish His work came from Him.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it mistaken to say that the Spirit of God first began working at Pentecost?

Personal Reflection

Has the Old Testament work of God's Spirit been less important in your understanding? Why?

Action Step

Choose one Old Testament account and explain which assumption about God's Spirit it corrects and how this strengthens your confidence in the one God.

The Spirit Speaking, Teaching and Giving Wisdom

The Spirit of God was also active in giving wisdom, instruction and prophetic understanding. God did not leave His people dependent upon human wisdom alone. His Spirit instructed and directed them.

Nehemiah looked back upon God's dealings with Israel and said in **Nehemiah 9:20**:

> *"Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst."*

Notice the expression *"thy good spirit."* The Spirit belonged to God and instructed His people. This prepares us for the New Testament teaching in which Jesus promised that the Comforter would teach His disciples and guide them into truth.

The prophets also spoke as the Spirit of God moved upon them. Ezekiel described the Spirit entering into him and enabling him to receive the word God was giving.

Ezekiel wrote in **Ezekiel 2:2**:

> *"And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me."*

Isaiah also prophesied concerning the Spirit resting upon the coming Messiah. Isaiah wrote in **Isaiah 11:2**:

> *"And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;"*

The different descriptions in this verse do not identify several spirits. They describe the wisdom, understanding, counsel, might and knowledge associated with the one Spirit of the LORD. The Spirit of God supplies what is necessary to accomplish God's purpose.

One Spirit Throughout Scripture

The Old Testament uses several expressions when speaking of God's Spirit, including *"the Spirit of God," "the Spirit of the LORD," "thy good spirit"* and *"thy holy spirit."* These expressions describe the Spirit in relation to God and His activity. They must not be treated as though they identify different divine beings or separate spirits.

David prayed in **Psalm 51:11**:

"Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me."

David connected God's presence with God's Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit belonged to the one God whom David worshipped. This same truth continues throughout Scripture and becomes clearer as God is revealed in Jesus Christ.

There is, however, an important development between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. Under the Old Covenant, Scripture frequently describes the Spirit coming upon particular people for appointed works. In the New Covenant, Jesus promised something greater: the Spirit who was with His disciples would be in them.

We must not therefore treat Pentecost as the first activity of the Spirit of God. The Spirit was present and working throughout the Old Testament. What changed at Pentecost was the New Covenant experience of God dwelling within His born-again people.

The Spirit who moved upon the waters, empowered God's servants, instructed Israel and spoke through the prophets is not another Spirit from the One revealed in the New Testament. There is one God and one Spirit. As we continue, Scripture will show more clearly that the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ, and that Jesus Christ now personally dwells within His people as Spirit.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does the Bible show continuity between the Spirit working in the Old Testament and the Spirit revealed in the New?

Personal Reflection

Have you viewed the Spirit's work in the Old Testament as the work of someone different from the Spirit of Christ?

Action Step

Compare an Old Testament account with **Romans 8:9***. Explain what you need to correct in your understanding of the one Spirit and why it matters.*

THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

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The Bible uses several expressions when speaking of the Holy Spirit. We read of the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the LORD, the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Christ. These expressions do not describe several divine Spirits. They reveal the one Spirit of the one true God.

Understanding this truth is essential before considering spiritual gifts. The gifts do not come from a divine Person separate from Jesus Christ. They are the operation of the one Spirit who is revealed to us in Jesus Christ and who now dwells within His born-again people.

God Is a Spirit

Jesus gave a simple and direct statement concerning the nature of God. Jesus said in **John 4:24**:

> *"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."*

God is Spirit. When Scripture speaks of the Spirit of God, it is not introducing another God alongside Him. It is speaking of God's own Spirit and His divine presence and activity.

This agrees with what we have already seen throughout the Old Testament. The Spirit of God moved upon the waters, gave life, instructed God's people and worked through those whom God appointed. The same God who acted throughout the Old Testament is revealed more fully in Jesus Christ.

The Father is the eternal Spirit who dwelt within and was revealed through the genuine human life of Jesus Christ. Jesus possessed real and complete humanity, yet the divine Spirit dwelling within Him was not another divine Person or a separate created human spirit. God Himself was revealed through the man Christ Jesus.

The Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ

Paul provides one of the clearest statements concerning the identity of the Spirit. Paul wrote in **Romans 8:9**:

> *"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."*

Notice the language Paul uses within the same verse. He first speaks of *"the Spirit of God"* dwelling in the believer and then immediately speaks of *"the Spirit of Christ."* Paul does not introduce two different Spirits. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ.

This truth is vital to understanding salvation. A person who belongs to Christ possesses the Spirit of Christ. The believer does not receive Jesus Christ at the new birth and then wait for another divine Person to be received at some later time.

The Spirit who dwells within the believer is the Spirit of Christ Himself. Jesus Christ is therefore not absent from His people. He personally dwells within them as Spirit.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important to see the Spirit of God as the Spirit of Christ dwelling within believers?

Personal Reflection

When you pray or seek guidance, do you think of Christ as present within you or as distant from you?

Action Step

Use **Romans 8:9** *to examine that view, and explain how knowing Christ is the indwelling Spirit should change your prayers and trust in Him.*

The Holy Ghost Dwells Within

Paul uses another expression when describing the same indwelling presence. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 6:19**:

> *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"*

Here Paul says that the Holy Ghost dwells within the believer. In **Romans 8:9** he calls the indwelling Spirit both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. These are not three different Spirits dwelling within the believer.

Paul also wrote in **1 Corinthians 3:16**:

> *"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"*

The believer is called the temple of God because the Spirit of God dwells within. The same indwelling Spirit is called the Holy Ghost and the Spirit of Christ. Scripture therefore brings these expressions together rather than separating them.

God does not divide His presence among His people as though one believer possessed the Spirit of God, another possessed the Spirit of Christ and another possessed the Holy Ghost. There is one Spirit dwelling within all who are born again.

There Is One Spirit

Paul states this truth directly when describing the unity of the Church. Paul wrote in **Ephesians 4:4-6**:

> *"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."*

Paul does not say there are several divine Spirits operating within the Church. He says plainly, *"There is one body, and one Spirit."* The unity of the body rests upon the reality of the one Spirit dwelling within its members.

This becomes particularly important when we begin studying spiritual gifts. There are many gifts, different ministries and different ways in which God works through His people, but there is not a different Spirit behind each operation. The source remains one.

The diversity is found in the gifts and functions. The unity is found in the Spirit.

The Lord Is That Spirit

Paul makes the relationship between the Lord and the Spirit even more direct. Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 3:17-18**:

> *"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."*

The statement *"the Lord is that Spirit"* must be allowed to speak plainly. The Holy Spirit is not another divine Person standing apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Himself is Spirit and dwells within His people.

This does not deny the genuine humanity of Jesus Christ. The Son is the complete genuine human life of Jesus Christ through whom the eternal God was revealed. His humanity was real, but the divine Spirit revealed through that humanity was the one eternal God.

The Lord who walked among His disciples in genuine human life would later fulfil His promise to dwell within them. The form of His presence would change, but the Person would not. This prepares us to understand the promise of the Comforter.

Christ Dwelling Within

The great New Covenant reality is not that believers receive something from Christ while Christ Himself remains distant. They receive Christ. His Spirit dwells within them, and His life becomes the source of their spiritual life.

Paul described this mystery in **Colossians 1:27**:

> *"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:"*

The words *"Christ in you"* bring the teaching into clear focus. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ, there is one Spirit, and the Lord is that Spirit. Jesus Christ personally dwells within His born-again people.

This truth must govern everything that follows in this module. When the Spirit teaches, directs, gives gifts or works through the members of the Church, Jesus Christ has not been displaced by another divine Person. It is the one Spirit of Christ working within His one body.

The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ. The Lord is that Spirit, and Jesus Christ dwells within His people.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does **Romans 8:9** *connect the Spirit of God with the Spirit of Christ?*

Personal Reflection

Have you accepted a claim about the Spirit that gives more attention to an experience than to Jesus Christ?

Action Step

Examine that claim in the light of the Bible and identify what you will now believe or reject so that Jesus Christ remains central.

THE PROMISE OF THE COMFORTER

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Before His crucifixion, Jesus spoke at length to His disciples about the Comforter who would come to them. These words are especially important because Jesus explained both the identity and the work of the Spirit who would dwell within His people. The promise was not that the disciples would be left without Christ and receive someone unrelated to Him. Jesus assured them that He Himself would come to them.

Another Comforter

Jesus introduced the promise of the Comforter while speaking with His disciples before His death. Jesus said in **John 14:15-16**:

> *"If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;"*

The word translated *"another"* is the Greek word ALLOS. The promise must be understood in the light of everything Jesus continued to say. He was preparing the disciples for a change in the manner of His presence with them, not for separation from Him.

The Comforter would *"abide with you for ever."* During His earthly ministry, Jesus had been physically present with His disciples. He taught them, corrected them, guided them and comforted them. His visible presence with them would soon change, but they would not be abandoned.

He Dwelleth With You and Shall Be in You

Jesus immediately identified the Comforter as the Spirit of truth and explained the change that was about to take place. Jesus said in **John 14:17**:

> *"Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."*

Jesus said that the disciples already knew the Spirit of truth because *"he dwelleth with you."* The Spirit was not being introduced as someone completely unknown to them. The disciples already knew Jesus, had walked with Him, listened to Him and lived in His presence.

The eternal Spirit of God dwelt within and was revealed through the genuine human life of Jesus Christ. The One who was then dwelling with them would soon dwell in them.

This marks an important New Covenant change. Jesus was not promising that His disciples would continue to depend upon His physical presence beside them. His presence would become inward. The Spirit who was with them would be in them.

The Christian life therefore rests upon more than remembering what Jesus once did while physically present among His disciples. Jesus Christ now dwells within His born-again people as Spirit. His presence is an inward New Covenant reality.

Personal Response

Key Truth

What does Jesus' promise of the Comforter show about His continuing presence with His disciples?

Personal Reflection

In which part of your life do you still behave as though Jesus has left you without His presence?

Action Step

Read **John 14:16–18**, *then identify one fear or attitude you will bring under Christ's promise, 'I will come to you.'*

I Will Come to You

Jesus then gave the statement that brings the promise into clear focus. Jesus said in **John 14:18-20**:

> *"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you."*

Jesus did not say that He would leave His disciples and another divine Person would come in His place. He said, *"I will come to you."* He also connected His coming with the inward relationship that would follow: *"ye in me, and I in you."*

The promise of the Comforter therefore leads directly to the indwelling Christ. Jesus Christ is not absent while the Holy Spirit takes His place. The promised coming of the Comforter is Jesus Christ coming to dwell within His people as Spirit.

The words *"I in you"* also prepare us to understand everything the Spirit later does through the Church. Teaching, guidance, spiritual gifts and ministry do not flow from a power operating independently from Christ. They flow from Christ dwelling within His people.

The Comforter Will Teach

Jesus also explained that the Comforter would teach His disciples and bring His words to their remembrance. Jesus said in **John 14:26**:

> *"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."*

Jesus directly identifies the Comforter as *"the Holy Ghost."* The Spirit would teach the disciples, but that teaching would not draw attention away from Jesus. The Comforter would bring to remembrance the things Jesus had already spoken.

This shows the close relationship between the Spirit and the Word. The Spirit of truth does not lead believers away from the teaching of Jesus or give messages that contradict the truth He has revealed. The Holy Spirit gives spiritual understanding, but His work always agrees with the Word of God. Jesus Christ, dwelling within His people as Spirit, gives understanding and leads them in the truth He has already revealed.

The Spirit of Truth Will Guide

Jesus continued this teaching shortly before His crucifixion. Jesus said in **John 16:13-15**:

> *"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you."*

The Spirit of truth would guide the disciples into truth and would glorify Jesus Christ. His work would not create a new centre of attention separate from Christ. Jesus said, *"He shall glorify me."*

This gives us an important measure when considering spiritual claims. The true work of the Spirit reveals and glorifies Jesus Christ. It does not elevate spiritual experiences, gifts, ministers or manifestations above Him.

Jesus also said that the Spirit would *"receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."* The work of the Spirit and the work of Christ must not be divided into competing divine ministries. The Spirit reveals what belongs to Christ because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ.

The Comforter Testifies of Christ

Jesus made the same point when He spoke of the Comforter's witness. Jesus said in **John 15:26**:

> *"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:"*

The Comforter testifies of Jesus Christ. The Spirit's work directs attention towards Him, reveals Him and makes His life known within His people.

This principle will become increasingly important as we examine spiritual gifts. A genuine operation of the Spirit will not make the gift itself the centre, nor will it exalt the person through whom the gift operates. The purpose remains consistent with the words of Jesus: *"he shall testify of me."*

The promise of the Comforter therefore reveals both presence and purpose. Jesus promised that the Spirit who was with His disciples would be in them. He promised, *"I will come to you,"* and He said that the Comforter would teach, guide, bring His words to remembrance and testify of Him.

The Comforter is the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth and the Spirit of Christ. Jesus Christ came as the Holy Spirit to dwell within His people, and from that indwelling presence He continues to teach, guide and work through His Church.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do the names Comforter, Spirit of truth and Spirit of Christ help us understand His work?

Personal Reflection

Do you look for unusual guidance while overlooking the Comforter's work of teaching God's Word and glorifying Jesus?

Action Step

Choose one promise of the Comforter and explain a change you will make in how you seek truth, guidance or comfort from Christ within.

PENTECOST: CHRIST CAME TO DWELL WITHIN HIS PEOPLE

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Jesus had promised His disciples that He would not leave them comfortless. He said, *"I will come to you."* He also told them that the Spirit of truth, who was with them, would be in them. The Day of Pentecost was the fulfilment of that promise.

Pentecost was not the arrival of another divine Person who came after Jesus had departed. It was the fulfilled coming of Jesus Christ to dwell within His people as Spirit.

The Promise Was to Be Fulfilled

Before His ascension, Jesus told the disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they received the promise of the Father. Luke recorded the words of Jesus in **Acts 1:4-5**:

> *"And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."*

Jesus connected the coming event with the promise they had already heard from Him. Before His crucifixion, He had spoken of the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who would dwell within them. He had also promised, *"I will come to you."*

The disciples were therefore waiting for the fulfilment of what Jesus had promised. They were not waiting to receive a divine Person unrelated to Christ. They were waiting for the New Covenant reality in which Jesus Christ would dwell within His people as Spirit.

The Day of Pentecost

The fulfilment came on the Day of Pentecost in A.D. 31. Luke wrote in **Acts 2:1-4**:

> *"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."*

The disciples were filled with the Holy Ghost. The promise Jesus had made was being fulfilled, and the Spirit who had been with them was now within them.

This marked a decisive New Covenant change. Under the Old Covenant, Scripture often described the Spirit coming upon particular people for particular works. Jesus had promised something greater to His disciples: *"he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."* At Pentecost, that inward New Covenant reality was fulfilled.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why was Pentecost more than a display of power for the disciples?

Personal Reflection

Have you understood Pentecost mainly as a display of signs, rather than the fulfilment of Christ's promised coming?

Action Step

Read Acts 2 with **John 14:18***. State which expectation about Pentecost needs correction and how this strengthens your trust in Jesus Christ today.*

Jesus Christ Came as Spirit

The connection between Jesus' promise and Pentecost must remain clear. Before His death, Jesus said, *"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."*

He did not promise that He would permanently leave His people and send another divine Person to replace Him. The One who had been with them in genuine human life came to dwell within them as Spirit.

Paul later wrote in **2 Corinthians 3:17**:

> *"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."*

The Lord is that Spirit. Pentecost therefore brought the promised presence of Jesus Christ within His people.

The disciples no longer depended upon Jesus being physically beside them in order to know His presence. He now dwelt within them. The manner of His presence had changed, but the Person had not.

The Church Filled With His Presence

The New Testament Church is not an organisation trying to continue the work of an absent Founder. Jesus Christ is present within His Church as Spirit.

Paul described the Church as God's dwelling place in **Ephesians 2:19-22**:

> *"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."*

The Church is *"an habitation of God through the Spirit."* God does not dwell in His people through an outward religious system. He dwells within them by His Spirit.

This gives the Church its spiritual life. Its unity, worship, ministry and service flow from the presence of Jesus Christ within His people. He is the Head, and His Spirit dwells within the members of His body.

The Beginning of the Gospel Day

Pentecost marked the beginning of the Gospel Day. The promised New Covenant reality had come, and Jesus Christ now dwelt within His people as Spirit. Peter explained that what the people were witnessing had been spoken of by the prophet Joel.

Peter said in **Acts 2:16-18**:

> *"But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:"*

The promise was no longer limited to selected individuals within one nation. The Gospel would go to all people, and those who were born again would receive the Spirit of Christ.

This also prepares us for the study of spiritual gifts. Joel spoke of God's Spirit working through His people, and Acts records the beginning of that New Covenant operation. The Spirit works through believers because the Spirit Himself dwells within the Church.

Pentecost was therefore more than a dramatic historical event. It was the fulfilment of Jesus' promise to come to His people and dwell within them. The Comforter had come, the Spirit of truth was within them, and Jesus Christ was present in His Church as Spirit.

From this point onward, the life and work of the Church must be understood from the reality of Christ within His people. The same indwelling Spirit who gives spiritual life also teaches, directs, equips and works through the members of the body according to the purpose of God.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must the Church's life and work begin with Christ dwelling in His people?

Personal Reflection

Where have you relied on pressure, talent or determination while forgetting that Christ is the life of His Church?

Action Step

Choose a genuine responsibility and explain how you will approach it from dependence on Christ within, rather than from personal striving for approval.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS RECEIVED AT THE NEW BIRTH

BACK TO CONTENTS

The Holy Spirit is not received as a later addition to salvation. Every person who is truly born again receives the Spirit of Christ at the new birth. This truth is essential before studying spiritual gifts because the gifts of the Spirit must never be separated from the salvation in which the believer already possesses the Spirit.

A person cannot belong to Jesus Christ while lacking the Spirit of Christ. Neither does the believer begin the Christian life with Christ and later receive another divine Person. The new birth brings the believer into a complete spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ.

Born of the Spirit

Jesus explained to Nicodemus that entrance into the kingdom of God requires a spiritual birth. Jesus said in **John 3:5-7**:

> *"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."*

The new birth is the work of God. It is not produced by church membership, religious ceremony or human decision alone. A person must be *"born of the Spirit."*

The Spirit is therefore not something added later to an already complete new birth. The new birth itself is a birth of the Spirit, and the person who is born again has received spiritual life from God.

The Christian life begins with the indwelling presence of Christ. Spiritual growth follows the new birth, but spiritual growth must never be confused with receiving the Holy Spirit at a later time.

The Spirit of Christ and Belonging to Christ

Paul makes the relationship between belonging to Christ and possessing His Spirit unmistakably clear. Paul wrote in **Romans 8:9**:

> *"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."*

Paul does not describe two classes of Christians: those who belong to Christ without His Spirit and those who later receive the Spirit. His statement is direct. If a person does not have the Spirit of Christ, that person does not belong to Christ.

This gives us a clear New Testament standard. Everyone who truly belongs to Jesus Christ possesses His Spirit. The same verse identifies the Spirit of God with the Spirit of Christ.

The believer who is born again receives Jesus Christ and receives the Holy Spirit because the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit is not an optional experience for certain believers. His indwelling presence belongs to the new birth itself.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does a believer receive the Spirit of Christ at the new birth rather than through a later experience?

Personal Reflection

Have you expected the Holy Spirit to arrive at a later stage after a person has been born again?

Action Step

Examine **Romans 8:9** *and the teaching on new birth. State plainly what belief must change and why a believer can trust that Christ is already present.*

Baptised by One Spirit Into One Body

Paul also explains how the believer becomes part of the body of Christ. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:13**:

> *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."*

This spiritual baptism brings the believer into the one body. Paul does not present it as an experience reserved for a smaller group of Christians after salvation. He says *"we all"* are baptised by one Spirit into one body.

This is how the Church is formed. Jew and Gentile, bond and free, are brought into the same body through the same Spirit. There is not one way into Christ for one group and another way for someone else. Paul identifies the body as the Church.

Paul wrote in **Colossians 1:18**:

> *"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."*

Jesus Christ is the Head of the body, and the body is the Church. Therefore, when the believer is baptised by one Spirit into one body, that person is brought into Christ's Church.

This does not happen through an outward ceremony. It is the inward work of God at the new birth.

One Spirit, Not a Later Second Reception

Some religious teaching separates salvation from receiving the Holy Spirit and teaches that a person may first be born again and later receive the Holy Spirit through another experience. **Romans 8:9** does not allow that separation. A person who belongs to Christ already possesses the Spirit of Christ.

Paul also wrote in **Ephesians 4:4-6**:

> *"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."*

There is one Spirit and one baptism. The New Testament does not establish one spiritual baptism that brings a person into Christ and then another required Spirit baptism that completes salvation later.

The believer may grow greatly in understanding, faith, obedience, wisdom and spiritual usefulness. God may lead a believer into new areas of service and may work through that person in different ways. None of this means that the person previously lacked the Holy Spirit.

Growth is not the same as receiving more of Christ. The believer already possesses the Person.

The Spirit Must Not Be Grieved or Forsaken

The Holy Spirit is received at the new birth, but Scripture does not teach that a person can afterwards turn away from truth and righteousness without consequence. The believer must continue in faith and obedience to Jesus Christ. If a person deliberately turns away from Him, that person can lose the indwelling presence of His Spirit.

This does not mean that the believer needs a second experience in order to receive more of the Holy Spirit. The believer already possesses the Spirit of Christ at the new birth. The warning concerns turning away from the relationship with Christ that has already been received. The Old Testament provides types that help us understand this principle.

Samuel wrote concerning Saul in **1 Samuel 16:14**:

> *"But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him."*

Saul had experienced the Spirit of the LORD working in his life, but he repeatedly disobeyed God and rejected His word. Eventually Scripture states plainly that *"the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul."* His position before God did not remain unchanged while he continued in rebellion.

Samson provides another serious example. God had used him mightily, yet Samson continued to disregard the responsibility connected with his calling.

The writer of Judges recorded in **Judges 16:20**:

> *"And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him."*

Samson assumed that he could continue as before, but *"the LORD was departed from him."* His outward confidence remained for a moment, but the presence and power upon which he had depended were no longer there.

These Old Testament accounts provide serious warnings. Under the New Covenant, the believer receives Jesus Christ as the indwelling Spirit at the new birth. The New Testament also warns against turning away after genuinely receiving salvation.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 6:4-6**:

> *"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."*

These words describe people who had been enlightened, had tasted the heavenly gift and had been *"made partakers of the Holy Ghost."* The warning is therefore not addressed to people who had never known anything of God. It concerns falling away after genuinely receiving spiritual life. Hebrews gives another solemn warning.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 10:26-29**:

> *"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"*

These verses describe someone who had received the knowledge of the truth and had been sanctified by the blood of the covenant, yet afterwards turned against the Son of God and *"done despite unto the Spirit of grace."* The warning is serious because the relationship had been real.

This teaching must be held together with **Romans 8:9**. A person who belongs to Christ possesses the Spirit of Christ. Therefore, if a person turns away from Christ until His Spirit no

longer dwells within, that person cannot still be described as belonging to Christ while lacking His Spirit.

The believer should therefore never treat salvation casually. The Holy Spirit is received at the new birth, and the believer must continue to walk in truth, faith and righteousness. Spiritual life is found in continued relationship with Jesus Christ.

The New Testament does not teach a second reception of the Holy Spirit. It does, however, warn that a person who has genuinely received Christ can turn away from Him.

We receive the Spirit of Christ at the new birth, and we must continue to abide in the One who dwells within us.

Complete in Christ

The completeness of salvation must remain clear when we consider spiritual gifts. A person who does not possess a particular gift is not spiritually incomplete. Neither does receiving a gift make someone more fully saved or more fully accepted by God.

Paul wrote in **Colossians 2:9-10**:

> *"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:"*

The believer is *"complete in him."* Spiritual gifts do not add a missing part to salvation. Offices do not make a believer more complete in Christ, and a later spiritual experience does not supply something absent from the new birth.

Complete means complete.

This distinction becomes especially important in a study of gifts. Gifts concern service and the operation of the Spirit through the body. They do not determine whether a person belongs to Christ.

The believer who is born again already has the Spirit of Christ dwelling within. From that complete relationship with Jesus Christ, the believer continues to grow and serve.

The Foundation for Spiritual Gifts

The study of spiritual gifts must therefore begin from the new birth rather than from the pursuit of supernatural experience. The question is not how a Christian can obtain a Spirit who is still missing. The question is how the one Spirit who already dwells within Christ's body chooses to work through its different members.

This protects the Church from creating spiritual classes. One believer may receive one gift and another believer may receive a different gift, but all who are born again possess the same Spirit.

The value of the believer is not measured by the visibility of a gift. The presence of a spectacular manifestation does not make one member more fully part of Christ than another. Every born-again believer belongs to the one body and possesses the one Spirit.

The foundation is therefore settled before we proceed further: the Holy Spirit is received at the new birth, the believer is baptised by one Spirit into one body, and salvation is complete in Jesus Christ. Spiritual gifts flow from that reality. They do not create it.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do spiritual gifts flow from the Spirit already received in the new birth?

Personal Reflection

Has comparing yourself with someone who has a visible gift made you feel less complete in Christ?

Action Step

Reject one such comparison by explaining what **Colossians 2:10** *means for your standing in Christ, then choose a humble way to serve another believer.*

THE INDWELLING SPIRIT AT WORK

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The Holy Spirit does not dwell within the believer without purpose. Jesus Christ lives within His born-again people as Spirit, and His indwelling presence gives spiritual life, understanding, direction and strength for faithful Christian living. The Christian life is therefore not an outward attempt to reproduce the life of Jesus through human effort.

Everything begins with Christ within. Spiritual growth, obedience, service and ministry flow from the life already received at the new birth. The believer learns to walk according to the life of Christ within rather than depending upon natural strength alone.

The Spirit of Life

Paul describes the Holy Spirit as *"the Spirit of life."* This directs our attention to one of the most important works of the indwelling Spirit: He gives spiritual life.

Paul wrote in **Romans 8:1-2**:

> *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."*

Notice that Paul speaks of *"the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus."* Spiritual life cannot be separated from Jesus Christ. The Spirit who gives life is the Spirit of Christ dwelling within the believer.

The Christian life does not begin with outward behaviour and then work inward. God first gives life through the new birth, and that inward life is then expressed outwardly. Obedience, holiness and service flow from what God has placed within.

This is why the believer must never be taught to live the Christian life by copying Jesus from a distance. Jesus Christ is not only the example before us. He is the life within us, and His indwelling life is the source from which Christian conduct proceeds.

The Spirit Teaches

Jesus promised that the Comforter would teach His disciples. The Holy Spirit gives spiritual understanding and enables believers to receive the truth of God's Word.

Jesus said in **John 14:26**:

> *"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."*

The Spirit's teaching does not replace Scripture. Jesus said that the Comforter would bring His words to the disciples' remembrance. The Spirit therefore works in harmony with the Word rather than leading believers away from it.

This is especially important when studying spiritual gifts. A person may claim spiritual revelation, guidance or supernatural experience, but no spiritual claim has authority to contradict the Word of God. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth.

The Spirit gives understanding as believers prayerfully study the Scriptures. Human teachers have an important place in the Church, but no teacher replaces the work of Christ within His people. Every believer must remain dependent upon the Spirit of truth and the Word of God.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does the indwelling Spirit help believers understand the Bible?

Personal Reflection

When studying the Bible, do you depend mainly on your own understanding or seek the teaching of Christ within?

Action Step

Choose a passage you are studying, examine the attitude you bring to it, and state how you will listen to God's Word with greater humility and trust.

The Spirit Guides Into Truth

Jesus also promised that the Spirit would guide His people into truth. Jesus said in **John 16:13-14**:

> *"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."*

The Spirit's guidance has a clear direction. He leads into truth and glorifies Jesus Christ. He does not lead believers into doctrine that contradicts Scripture, excuse sin or place spiritual manifestations above Christ.

This gives us an important measure when considering spiritual guidance. The question is not simply whether an experience feels powerful, unusual or convincing. We must ask whether it agrees with the Word of God and directs us towards Jesus Christ and His truth.

The Holy Spirit never needs error in order to accomplish God's purpose. The Spirit of truth leads according to truth.

Led by the Spirit of God

The indwelling Spirit also leads the believer in daily Christian life. Paul connects belonging to God with being led by His Spirit.

Paul wrote in **Romans 8:13-14**:

> *"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."*

Being led by the Spirit is not limited to receiving unusual directions concerning major decisions. The Spirit leads the believer away from the works of the flesh and into a life governed by God. His leading touches choices, attitudes, words, relationships, service and conduct.

The words *"through the Spirit"* are also important. Victory over sinful conduct is not presented as independent human effort. The believer walks according to the life and power of Christ within.

Being led by the Spirit therefore involves yielded obedience. The believer is not passive, but neither is spiritual life produced independently of Christ. We respond to God because His life is already working within.

Strengthened by His Spirit Within

The indwelling Spirit also strengthens the believer inwardly. Paul prayed that the believers at Ephesus would understand this inward work of God.

Paul wrote in **Ephesians 3:16-17**:

> *"That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,"*

Paul connects being strengthened by the Spirit with Christ dwelling within. Once again, the Spirit and Christ are not presented as two independent sources of spiritual life. The inward strengthening is the work of Christ within His people.

This strength is necessary because Christian service cannot be sustained by natural enthusiasm alone. Human energy rises and falls, and difficulties, opposition and weariness expose the limits of natural ability. The believer, however, has an inward source greater than human strength.

The Spirit strengthens the *"inner man."* The work begins within and is then expressed through the life of the believer.

The Life of Christ Expressed Through His People

The purpose of the indwelling Spirit is not to make the believer spiritually independent. Christ dwelling within brings the believer into continual dependence upon Him. The more clearly we understand the indwelling Spirit, the less reason there is for boasting in personal ability. Paul expressed this dependence when speaking of his own life.

Paul wrote in **Galatians 2:20**:

> *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."*

Paul did not describe Christian life as his own improved ability. He said, *"Christ liveth in me."* This is the New Covenant reality that must govern our understanding of spiritual life and service.

The same principle applies when we study gifts and offices. A spiritual gift must never become an opportunity for the believer to display personal importance. The source remains Christ within, and the purpose remains the will of God and the edification of His body.

The believer therefore lives, learns, serves and grows from an inward spiritual reality. The Spirit gives life, teaches truth, guides the believer and strengthens the inner man. Jesus Christ dwells within His people, and His life within is expressed through them.

Christian life and service do not begin with human ability reaching towards Christ. They begin with Jesus Christ dwelling within and working through His born-again people.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does Christian service begin with Christ's life within us?

Personal Reflection

Which part of your service has become a burden driven by human expectations rather than love for Christ?

Action Step

Identify one motive needing correction and describe how your next act of service can express the life of Christ within you.

LED AND DIRECTED BY THE SPIRIT

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The indwelling Spirit does more than give spiritual life and understanding. Jesus Christ also leads His people in the work He has called them to do. Christian service is therefore not meant to be directed simply by human ambition, personal preference or natural ability. The believer learns to respond to the direction of Christ within.

This does not mean that every thought, feeling or desire should automatically be called the leading of the Spirit. The Spirit of truth works in harmony with the Word of God. His direction will not contradict Scripture, promote self-importance or draw the believer away from Jesus Christ.

Led by the Spirit of God

Paul describes the children of God as those who are led by the Spirit. Paul wrote in **Romans 8:14**:

> *"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."*

The leading of the Spirit belongs to the normal life of those who belong to God. The believer has received the Spirit of Christ and learns to walk according to His life within.

This leading includes conduct, choices and service. The Spirit leads the believer away from the works of the flesh and towards the will of God. He does not lead the believer into independence from Christ, but into deeper submission to Him.

To be led by the Spirit therefore requires a heart willing to obey. God may direct a believer towards service that is difficult, costly or different from personal plans. The question is not simply what the believer prefers to do, but what Christ desires to accomplish through that life.

The Spirit Directed the Work

The book of Acts gives a clear example of the Spirit directing the work of the Church at Antioch. Luke wrote in **Acts 13:1-3**:

> *"Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."*

The work did not begin with Barnabas and Saul announcing their own importance or creating positions for themselves. The Holy Ghost said, *"Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."* The calling came from God, and the Church recognised that calling and released them for the work.

This is an important principle when considering ministry and offices. A title does not create a divine calling, and human appointment alone cannot produce spiritual ministry. God calls, equips and directs His servants, while the Church recognises the work He is doing.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does the Spirit's leading relate to ministry and offices in the Church?

Personal Reflection

Have you admired a ministry title more than the faithful service given to Christ's people?

Action Step

Examine a real example of leadership by Christ's Word. Explain how this will change the honour, support or trust you give to that ministry.

Sent Forth by the Holy Ghost

Luke continues the account by emphasising the source of their direction. Luke wrote in **Acts 13:4**:

> *"So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus."*

Barnabas and Saul were *"sent forth by the Holy Ghost."* Their journey was not simply an organisational programme created by the Church at Antioch. The Spirit of God was directing the work.

Because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, this was Jesus Christ directing the work of His own body. Christ remained the Head of the Church even though He worked through human servants.

This principle protects the Church from two opposite errors. Ministry must not become independent human activity in which people appoint themselves and pursue their own ambitions. Neither should believers refuse responsibility while waiting for dramatic supernatural signs before they will serve. The Spirit works through yielded people who are already walking in obedience to the truth God has revealed.

The Spirit May Change Human Plans

The Spirit's direction does not always follow the plans believers initially make. Paul and those travelling with him experienced this when particular areas of ministry were closed to them.

Luke wrote in **Acts 16:6-10**:

> *"Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them."*

Paul was already engaged in Gospel work, yet the Spirit redirected where that work should take place. The servants of God were active, but they were not independent.

Notice also the wording at the end of these verses. After the direction of the Spirit, they concluded *"that the Lord had called us."* The direction of the Spirit and the calling of the Lord are not two separate divine activities. The Lord was directing His servants by His Spirit.

This teaches us that sincere plans may sometimes need to change. A believer may have good intentions and still need to submit those intentions to the direction of Christ.

The Spirit Directs Individual Believers

The Spirit's direction can also be seen in the account of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. Philip had been preaching in Samaria when God directed him towards a single traveller.

Luke wrote in **Acts 8:29-31**:

> *"Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him."*

Philip obeyed the direction he received, and that obedience opened the way for the Gospel to be explained from Scripture. The value of the work was not determined by the size of the audience.

Philip was willing to leave a wider field of activity and speak to one person because the Spirit directed him. This reminds us that service is not measured simply by visibility. Christ may direct one believer towards public ministry and another towards quiet service that few people see. Both must remain responsive to the same Head.

Christ Remains the Head

Spiritual direction must always preserve the headship of Jesus Christ. The Church does not belong to ministers, leaders, teachers or organisations.

Paul wrote in **Colossians 1:18**:

> *"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."*

Because Jesus Christ is the Head, every ministry remains accountable to Him. The Spirit does not direct people so that they can build personal kingdoms or gather followers around themselves. He directs the members of the body so that the purpose of Christ is accomplished.

The indwelling Spirit therefore gives both ability and direction. Jesus Christ calls, leads and works through His people according to His will. The believer's responsibility is to remain yielded to Him, grounded in His Word and ready to serve where He directs.

This prepares us to understand spiritual gifts correctly. Gifts are not powers that believers use independently. They belong to the operation of the one Spirit within the one body, under the continuing headship and direction of Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why are spiritual gifts never powers to use apart from Christ's direction?

Personal Reflection

Have you wanted a spiritual gift mainly to be noticed, valued or regarded as important?

Action Step

Identify that motive honestly and choose a way to serve Christ's body that expresses His love, even if the service receives no recognition.

DISCERNING THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

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The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, but Scripture also warns that not every spiritual claim comes from God. Believers must therefore learn to distinguish between the true work of the Spirit and teaching, impressions or manifestations that do not agree with the Word of God.

Spiritual discernment is not suspicion of everything spiritual, nor is it blind acceptance of everything that appears supernatural. The believer must test spiritual claims carefully and allow Scripture to remain the final authority.

Believe Not Every Spirit

John gave a direct warning to the Church. John wrote in **1 John 4:1**:

> *"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."*

The command is clear: *"believe not every spirit."* A claim that something is spiritual does not prove that it comes from God. The believer is instructed to *"try the spirits."*

John connects this warning with false prophets. A false spiritual influence may therefore appear through teaching, religious claims or people who speak as though they have divine authority. Discernment requires more than judging outward appearance. We must ask whether what is being taught agrees with the truth God has revealed.

The Spirit of Truth Agrees With the Word

Jesus called the Holy Spirit "the Spirit of truth." Jesus said in **John 16:13**:

> *"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."*

The Spirit of truth leads into truth. He does not contradict the Word of God or lead believers into doctrine that opposes what Scripture establishes.

This gives us an essential test for spiritual teaching. A person may claim that God has spoken, that the Spirit has revealed something or that a particular experience carries divine authority. Such claims must still be examined by the Word of God.

The Holy Spirit does not require believers to choose between His leading and Scripture. God does not contradict Himself. The Spirit who works within the believer agrees with the truth He has revealed in His Word. Isaiah gave a principle that remains important whenever claims of spiritual light are made.

Isaiah wrote in **Isaiah 8:20**:

> *"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."*

Truth must be tested by the Word. Spiritual language cannot make error true.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must spiritual claims be tested by truth, even when they use spiritual language?

Personal Reflection

When have spiritual language or an impressive experience made you less careful about what the Bible teaches?

Action Step

Choose one spiritual claim, compare it with God's Word, and explain what you will now accept, question or reject in response.

Jesus Christ Remains the Centre

Jesus also gave another important measure for recognising the work of the Spirit. Jesus said in **John 16:14**:

> *"He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."*

The true work of the Spirit glorifies Jesus Christ. This does not identify the Holy Spirit as another divine Person beside Him. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, and Jesus Christ is Himself present and working within His people as Spirit. His work does not place spiritual gifts, supernatural experiences, religious personalities or organisations above Him.

This does not mean that every genuine work of the Spirit must use the name of Jesus in every sentence. It means that the direction and result of His work agree with the truth and Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Where spiritual activity causes people to depend upon a human personality, seek manifestations for their own sake or treat experience as more authoritative than Scripture, careful discernment is required. Jesus Christ, working within His people as the Spirit of truth, reveals His truth and directs attention towards Himself.

Fruit Must Also Be Considered

Jesus taught that false prophets could be recognised by their fruit. Jesus said in **Matthew 7:15-20**:

> *"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."*

Jesus did not tell His disciples to accept a prophet because of appearance, confidence or religious language. He directed their attention to fruit.

Doctrine and conduct both matter. A person's claims should be examined alongside what is being taught and the fruit being produced. Spiritual gifts do not excuse conduct that contradicts the life and truth of Jesus Christ. Impressive activity therefore cannot replace righteousness, truth and obedience.

Supernatural Activity Is Not the Final Test

Scripture never teaches that something must be from God simply because it appears supernatural. Signs alone are not the final test of truth. Jesus warned that religious claims could be made in His name while the people making them were not doing the will of God.

Jesus said in **Matthew 7:21-23**:

> *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."*

Claims of prophecy and wonderful works did not replace obedience to God. This is an important warning before studying the gifts of the Spirit in detail.

We must never assume that a manifestation is genuine simply because it is unusual, emotional or powerful. Scripture, truth and spiritual fruit must remain part of our discernment.

Discernment Belongs to Every Believer

Later in this module we will consider discerning of spirits as a particular spiritual gift. That specific gift must not be confused with the general responsibility given to all believers to test what they hear.

Every believer is commanded to *"try the spirits."* Every believer must compare teaching with Scripture and remain alert to what directs people towards or away from Jesus Christ and His truth. Paul gave the Thessalonian believers a simple instruction.

Paul wrote in **1 Thessalonians 5:21-22**:

> *"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil."*

Believers are not told to accept everything, nor are they told to reject everything. They are told to *"prove all things"* and hold fast what is good. This is biblical discernment.

The Spirit of Truth Leads Into Truth

The believer who possesses the Spirit of Christ must still remain grounded in Scripture. The indwelling Spirit does not remove the need to study, test and exercise spiritual judgement. He enables the believer to understand and walk according to truth.

This becomes especially important when considering spiritual gifts. Gifts must never become a substitute for truth. No manifestation can overturn Scripture, and no claim of spiritual authority can place a person beyond biblical examination.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. He glorifies Jesus Christ, agrees with the Word of God and produces fruit consistent with His life. As we move towards the study of spiritual gifts, this principle must remain firmly established: everything claimed to be spiritual must be tested by the truth of God's Word.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does the Spirit of truth guard the Church from error?

Personal Reflection

What belief or experience have you been reluctant to examine because it feels important to you?

Action Step

Examine it in the light of the Bible and record whether your understanding or response needs to change so that Christ and His truth come first.

ONE SPIRIT WORKING THROUGH ONE BODY

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The Holy Spirit does not dwell within believers as isolated individuals without relationship to the rest of the Church. Every born-again believer is brought by one Spirit into one body, and each member becomes part of the spiritual body of Christ. The same Spirit who gives life to each believer also works through the different members for the good of the whole body.

This is the foundation for understanding spiritual gifts. Gifts are not given so that individuals can become spiritually independent or personally important. They belong to the operation of the one Spirit within the one body under the headship of Jesus Christ.

One Body and One Spirit

Paul connects the unity of the Church directly with the unity of the Spirit. Paul wrote in **Ephesians 4:4-6**:

> *"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."*

There is one body because there is one Lord and one Spirit. The Church is not divided spiritually according to nationality, social position, natural ability or the particular gift through which a believer serves.

Every born-again believer possesses the same Spirit of Christ. The differences among believers are not differences in the Spirit they possess. The differences are found in the ways God chooses to work through the individual members.

Paul therefore places unity before diversity. Before speaking of different ministries and gifts, the Church must understand that all born-again believers belong to one body.

Many Members in One Body

Paul uses the human body to explain how unity and diversity work together within the Church. Paul wrote in **Romans 12:4-5**:

> *"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."*

A human body has many different members, but those members do not form separate bodies. Each has a different function while remaining part of the same body.

Paul applies this directly to the Church: *"we, being many, are one body in Christ."* The unity of believers does not require everyone to perform the same work. Different functions operate together within the one body under one Head.

This protects the Church from expecting every believer to serve in exactly the same way. Different functions are not evidence of spiritual inequality. They are part of the order God has placed within the body.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why needn't every member of Christ's body serve in the same way?

Personal Reflection

Whose less visible service have you undervalued because it differs from your own?

Action Step

Name the attitude you need to correct, then encourage that believer in a way that shows genuine respect for Christ's work through them.

Every Member Has a Place

Paul develops this illustration further in his teaching to the Corinthians. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:14-18**:

> *"For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him."*

No member should conclude that they have no value because their function differs from someone else's. The foot is not less part of the body because it is not a hand, and the ear is not less necessary because it is not an eye.

The important statement is *"God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him."* The arrangement of the body belongs to God.

This should remove both pride and discouragement. A believer should not become proud because a particular gift or ministry is highly visible. Neither should another believer feel unimportant because their service receives less public attention. Every member belongs to the body according to God's purpose.

Different Functions, the Same Source

The differences within the body do not come from different spiritual sources. Paul makes this especially clear when introducing the gifts of the Spirit.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:4-7**:

> *"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."*

Paul recognises diversities of gifts, differences of administrations and diversities of operations. Yet throughout these differences he repeatedly directs attention back to the same source.

It is *"the same Spirit," "the same Lord,"* and *"the same God which worketh all in all."* Diversity therefore does not divide the body when every member remains dependent upon the same Lord.

This also guards against treating gifts as personal possessions that operate independently from God. The believer may exercise a gift, but God remains the source of its spiritual operation.

Given to Profit the Body

Paul explains why the manifestation of the Spirit is given: *"to profit withal."* The gifts are given for the good of the body.

A spiritual gift should therefore never become a means of drawing attention to the person through whom it operates. The purpose is not personal recognition, spiritual status or competition with other believers. The purpose is service and the edification of the Church. Paul later explains this principle directly.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 14:12**:

> *"Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church."*

The desire for spiritual gifts must be governed by the desire to build up the Church. The question should not be, *"Which gift will make me appear spiritual?"* The question should be, *"How can the Spirit work through me for the good of Christ's body?"*

This brings the subject back to love and service. Gifts operate properly when the believer remains submitted to Christ and concerned for the welfare of others.

The Members Need One Another

Paul also warns against the opposite error: believing that one member has no need of another. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:20-22**:

> *"But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:"*

No gift makes a believer independent from the rest of the body. The Church needs the different functions God has placed within it.

This requires humility. A person may be strongly gifted in one area while depending upon the ministry of another believer in a different area. God has designed the body so that its members serve together rather than compete against one another.

Even those whose service appears less visible are described as *"necessary."* Human recognition does not determine spiritual value.

Christ Remains the Head

Although the body contains many members and functions, there is only one Head. Paul wrote in **Colossians 2:19**:

> *"And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God."*

The life and increase of the body come from the Head. The members do not create spiritual life for themselves, and the gifts do not replace Jesus Christ as the source of the Church's life.

This keeps spiritual gifts in their proper place. They are important because Christ chooses to work through His people, but they must never become more important than the One who gives them.

The Church is one body, Jesus Christ is its Head, and one Spirit dwells within every born-again member. That one Spirit works through different members in different ways for the edification of the whole body.

This prepares us for the next stage of the module. Having established the one Spirit and the one body, we can now examine the spiritual gifts through which the Spirit works.

There are many members and different operations, but there is one body, one Spirit and one Head: Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do one body, one Spirit and one Head hold different members together?

Personal Reflection

Have differing responsibilities ever made you resent or distance yourself from another member of Christ's body?

Action Step

Identify the cause of that division and take one step towards serving together in the unity Christ has already given.

FROM THE INDWELLING SPIRIT TO THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

BACK TO CONTENTS

We have established that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, that Jesus Christ came to dwell within His people as Spirit, and that every born-again believer receives the Holy Spirit at the new birth. The same Spirit who gives spiritual life also teaches, leads, strengthens and directs the members of Christ's body.

This brings us naturally to the subject of spiritual gifts. The gifts must always be understood from the foundation of the indwelling Christ. They do not introduce another spiritual experience or another source of divine power. They are part of the operation of the one Spirit within the one body.

The Source of Every Spiritual Gift

Paul makes the source of spiritual gifts clear. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:4-7**:

> *"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."*

The gifts differ, but the Spirit is the same. Ministries differ, but the Lord is the same. Operations differ, but God remains the One working through them.

A spiritual gift therefore cannot be separated from Jesus Christ. The believer does not possess an independent spiritual ability that can be exercised apart from the will and direction of Christ. The gift belongs to God's operation through the believer.

The source remains more important than the gift. Jesus Christ is the One who gives life to His body and works through its members.

Gifts Do Not Exalt the Individual

A visible or unusual gift can easily draw attention to the person through whom it operates. Scripture does not present spiritual gifts as evidence that one believer is more important, more complete or more accepted by God than another. Paul asked the Corinthians a question that removes the ground for spiritual pride.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 4:7**:

> *"For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"*

Whatever God gives has been received. There is therefore no basis for boasting as though the believer were the source.

This principle applies directly to spiritual gifts. A person who has received a gift must remain humble because the ability comes from God. The gift should direct attention towards the purpose of Christ rather than towards the importance of the individual.

Different gifts also do not create different levels of salvation. Every born-again believer is complete in Christ. Gifts concern function and service within the body, not the degree to which someone belongs to Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why do different gifts never create different levels of salvation?

Personal Reflection

Have you measured your spiritual worth by the gifts or experiences of other believers?

Action Step

Explain how the new birth and completeness in Christ correct that comparison and what attitude towards other believers must now change.

Christ Remains the Head

The operation of gifts never changes the headship of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote in **Ephesians 4:15-16**:

> *"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."*

Christ is the Head, and the whole body receives its life and direction from Him. Every joint supplies something, and every part has its measure of working, but all remain connected to the Head.

This gives us a balanced understanding of ministry. The individual member matters, and the contribution of each member matters, but no member replaces Christ. No gift makes someone the spiritual source of the Church. Everything proceeds from Christ the Head.

Gifts Are Given to Serve

The purpose of spiritual gifts is the edification of the body. They are not given simply so that believers may have unusual experiences. Peter expressed this principle clearly.

Peter wrote in **1 Peter 4:10-11**:

> *"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."*

Peter connects the gift with service: *"minister the same one to another."* The believer is a steward of what God has given rather than the owner of an independent spiritual power.

He also identifies the source of ability. Ministry is to be carried out *"as of the ability which God giveth."* The purpose is that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. This is the right setting for every spiritual gift: received from God, exercised in dependence upon Him, directed towards others and used for the glory of Jesus Christ.

The Body Is Edified Through Love

Spiritual gifts must also operate within love. Paul deliberately placed his great teaching on charity between his teaching on spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians chapters 12 and 14. Without love, impressive spiritual activity loses its proper purpose.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 13:1-3**:

> *"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."*

The value of a gift is not measured simply by how remarkable it appears. Its operation must remain governed by love and directed towards the edification of others.

The life of Christ within produces that love. Spiritual gifts therefore cannot be separated from spiritual character.

Preparing to Study the Gifts

We are now ready to consider the gifts of the Spirit in greater detail. The foundation has first been established so that the gifts can be understood in their proper place.

There is one God, one Lord, one Spirit and one body. Jesus Christ dwells within every born-again believer as Spirit. He remains the Head of His Church and works through the different members according to His purpose.

Spiritual gifts do not complete salvation, create spiritual rank or belong to independent human ability. They are given for service and for the edification of the body. The next Study Guide will therefore consider the gifts of the Spirit themselves: what they are, why they are given, how they differ and how the one Spirit works through many members.

The believer possesses the Person. The gifts flow from the Person. Jesus Christ remains the source, the Head and the centre of all spiritual service.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does Jesus remain the source and centre of every spiritual gift?

Personal Reflection

What gift, leader or spiritual experience has sometimes received more of your attention than Jesus Christ Himself?

Action Step

Identify one way you will redirect that attention to Christ and recognise His purpose rather than exalting the person or gift.

CONCLUSION: JESUS CHRIST DWELLS AND WORKS WITHIN HIS PEOPLE

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The Holy Spirit is not separate from Jesus Christ. Scripture identifies the Spirit of God as the Spirit of Christ and declares that *"the Lord is that Spirit."* Jesus Christ, who was revealed through genuine human life, came to dwell within His people as Spirit and remains personally present within every born-again believer.

The Spirit of God was active throughout Scripture. He moved in creation, worked through God's servants, gave wisdom and understanding, and spoke through the prophets. Under the New Covenant, however, Jesus promised something greater than the Spirit working upon selected individuals for particular purposes. He promised that the Spirit who was with His disciples would be in them.

Jesus said in **John 14:16-18**:

> *"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."*

The promise was fulfilled at Pentecost in A.D. 31. Jesus did not leave His people and send another divine Person to replace Him. He fulfilled His promise, *"I will come to you,"* and came to dwell within His people as the Holy Spirit.

Every person who is truly born again receives the Spirit of Christ. There is no genuine Christian life in which a person first belongs to Christ and then waits to receive the Holy Spirit at a later time. If a person does not have the Spirit of Christ, that person does not belong to Him.

At the new birth, the believer receives Jesus Christ, receives the Holy Spirit, is baptised by one Spirit into one body and is complete in Him. Spiritual growth follows the new birth, but it does not complete something that was missing from salvation.

Jesus Christ, dwelling within the believer as the Holy Spirit, is active within His people. He gives spiritual life, teaches, guides, strengthens and directs. His work within the believer always agrees with Scripture and glorifies the truth of who He is.

For this reason, believers must exercise spiritual discernment. Not every spiritual claim, manifestation or religious experience comes from God. Scripture commands us to try the spirits, prove all things and hold fast that which is good. The Word of God remains the plumb line by which spiritual claims are tested.

The same Spirit who dwells within individual believers also works throughout the one body of Christ. There are many members, and those members do not all have the same function. God has placed them within the body according to His purpose, and the one Spirit works through them in different ways.

This prepares us to understand spiritual gifts correctly. Gifts do not give believers independent spiritual power, make them more complete in Christ or establish spiritual rank. They are given for service and for the edification of the body.

Jesus Christ remains the Head. The Spirit working within the Church is His Spirit. Every gift, ministry and operation must therefore remain under His direction and serve His purpose.

The foundation is now established: there is one body and one Spirit. Jesus Christ dwells within His born-again people, and from His indwelling presence He works through the members of His body according to His will.

The next Study Guide will examine the gifts of the Spirit and how the one Spirit works through many members for the edification of the Church.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must the many spiritual gifts be understood in light of Christ dwelling in His people?

Personal Reflection

After this study, what assumption about the Holy Spirit or His gifts has most changed for you?

Action Step

State the personal change you will make because Christ already dwells within His people, and explain how it will affect the way you view or serve His body.

SUBMISSION TO COGMA FOR APPRAISAL

Instructions

Complete this section after you have finished the Study Guide. It must be completed online.

The link is located at the bottom of the online Study Guide — https://cogma.com.au/study-guides/

Your answers should reflect your understanding, your personal response, and how you intend to live by the truth you have studied. Answer honestly and be specific.

1. Main Truth

Explain why the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ dwelling in believers. How does this truth help you understand both the new birth and the life of the Church?

2. Understanding

The Spirit worked through God's servants before Pentecost. What changed when Jesus fulfilled His promise of the Comforter, and why does that change matter for believers now?

3. Personal Reflection

Has the teaching that every born-again believer receives the Spirit of Christ corrected or strengthened your understanding? Explain what you now understand more clearly and why it matters to you.

4. Response to Truth

How should Christ's presence within you affect the way you seek guidance and serve others? Describe one area where you need to rely on Him more consciously, and explain why.

5. Action Step

Identify one belief or spiritual claim that may have drawn your attention away from Jesus Christ and His indwelling Spirit. Which Bible verses will you use to test it, and what needs to change in your understanding or response?

6. Early Response

Have you begun to examine that belief or claim using the Bible? If so, explain what you found and what has changed in your response to Christ. If not, explain what has prevented you from beginning.

7. Ongoing Practice

What will help you continue to test spiritual claims by the Bible while following Christ as the Head of His body? Explain how this will affect the way you listen and serve.

8. Doctrinal Clarity

Some teach that a believer receives the Holy Spirit only after the new birth or that a visible gift proves a higher standing with God. Why are these conclusions wrong? Use verses about the Spirit of Christ and the one body to explain.

9. Living the Truth

How should the one Spirit and Christ's headship affect the way you value believers whose service differs from yours and cooperate with them? Give one real example.

10. Final Response

Bring together Christ's promise of the Comforter, His presence at the new birth, and His work through many members. What has become clearer to you, and how will these truths guide the way you follow and serve Him?