



THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”

1 Corinthians 12:7 (NIV 1984)

As we have seen, all those who have been born again by the Holy Spirit can (and should) expect to experience the promised baptism in the Holy Spirit—the gateway to a life of being continually filled with the Holy Spirit.

God’s intention has always been that His people, individually and corporately, should manifest His likeness and outwork His purpose on the earth (see [Genesis 1:26-28](#)). This would be impossible were it not for His Holy Spirit, who enables us to be all that we are called to be and to do all that we are called to do.

In this session, we are going to consider further what the Spirit-filled life should look like for us as individuals and for the gathered church—and at the implications of this for the world.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE INDIVIDUAL

We should always be seeking more of the Holy Spirit because by Him we can increasingly enjoy the amazing blessings of our relationship with God. For example:

THE ASSURANCE THAT WE ARE GOD’S CHILDREN

The wonderful reality that we **“are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus”** ([Galatians 3:26 - NIV 1984](#)) can be hard to grasp for those who have spent years feeling separated or distant from Him. We need the help of the Spirit:

“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,” [Romans 8:14-16](#)

THE ASSURANCE OF GOD'S LOVE

Not only does the Holy Spirit testify that we are God's children, but He enables us to experience God's love:

"...God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." [Romans 5:5](#)

THE ABILITY TO KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THE MIND AND HEART OF GOD

The Holy Spirit reveals God to us ([Ephesians 1:17](#)), and it is by the Spirit that we can have the joy and privilege of knowing God's thoughts:

"For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God." [1 Corinthians 2:10b-12](#)

SENSITIVITY TO THE VOICE OF GOD

"While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" [Acts 13:2](#)

Not only does the Holy Spirit enable us to hear the voice of God, but it is also by Him that God will speak through us, whatever the situation:

"And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit." [Mark 13:11](#)

CONFORMITY TO THE LIKENESS OF CHRIST

"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." [2 Corinthians 3:17-18](#)

We have seen that in Old Testament times, the Holy Spirit came upon certain people at particular times, anointing them for a specific task or purpose. Sadly, although these times may have been powerful and dramatic, the characters of those being used by the Spirit often seemed to remain unchanged—and in several cases they behaved in a way that was far from God-glorifying! However, God's promise was that things would be different under the New Covenant.

"And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules." [Ezekiel 36:26-27](#)

Although God created us to be in His likeness, we fell short of that because of sin ([Romans 3:23](#)). However, in Jesus, God wonderfully restored His image in the earth ([Hebrews 1:3](#)). Now by the pouring out of His Spirit, we can experience transforming power, enabling us to become holy and Christ-like. We can see the work of the Holy Spirit in two aspects of our ongoing conformity to the likeness of Christ:

SANCTIFICATION: CHRIST'S HOLINESS EVIDENT IN US

The Holy Spirit empowers us to live in a godly way:

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other...”
Galatians 5:16-17

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: CHRIST'S CHARACTER EVIDENT IN US

And by the working of the Holy Spirit we are changed from the inside out, as His fruit is produced in us:

“...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control;”
Galatians 5:22-23a

The gifts of the Spirit (which we will look at in a moment) can manifest instantly, but the fruit of the Spirit takes time to develop. Gifts reveal a lot about the giver, but not necessarily much about the recipient. Fruit, however, reveals a lot about the “tree” that bears it (see [Matthew 7:15-20](#)). The gifts of the Spirit operating through us show people how wonderful God is. The evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives shows people how Christ-like we are.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH

We can often be inclined to think very individualistically when considering the work of the Holy Spirit, but it is important to understand that God's desire is for a people who collectively become a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit.

“In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.” [Ephesians 2:21-22 \(NIV 1984\)](#)

There are many ways that God's Spirit should be evident in the Church, including in our unity with one another (“For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” [1 Corinthians 12:13](#)) and in our worship (“For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh” [Philippians 3:3](#)). However, one of the clearest ways in which the Spirit manifests His presence in the Church is through spiritual gifts.

THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

Gifts of the Spirit are referenced throughout the New Testament, but the main passages in relation to them are [Romans 12:3-8](#) and [1 Corinthians 12-14](#) (though see also [1 Peter 4:10-11](#) and [Ephesians 4:7-16](#), which focuses particularly on the gifted ministries that Christ gives to the Church and which we'll look at in detail in later sessions).

In this section, we'll concentrate on the gifts listed in [1 Corinthians 12:7-11](#). Though not exhaustive, this list helps us to see important principles for God's purpose in giving gifts and His desire in their use.

At the opening of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he positively affirms the fact that they “do not lack any spiritual gift” ([1 Corinthians 1:7 - NIV 1984](#)). Despite excesses and disorderly behavior, not to mention issues of major sin still present in this young church, Paul wants to encourage and instruct them in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, not shut them down. His concern was that they would not be ignorant about spiritual gifts ([1 Corinthians 12:1](#)). Let's look at his apostolic instruction to them:

“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.” [1 Corinthians 12:7-11 \(NIV 1984\)](#)

SPECIFIC GIFTS

Scripture does not give us definitions or direct explanations of most of these gifts, but from what we do have in Scripture and from what many have experienced under the leading of the Holy Spirit, we can briefly say the following in relation to them:

THE MESSAGE (OR WORD) OF WISDOM — the Spirit revealing to us how to deal with a (perhaps difficult) situation or person, including what to say and/or how to say it.

THE MESSAGE (OR WORD) OF KNOWLEDGE — the Spirit revealing to us information about a person or situation that, naturally speaking, we could not have known. This can often bring conviction of sin or unlock a situation, leading to salvation, healing, or spiritual/emotional release.

FAITH — though all Christians obviously have some level of faith, the reference here is probably to a person having and communicating a particularly high level of faith in something that God has said, thereby building others up in their faith.

GIFTS OF HEALING(S) — in the original Greek, both of the key words are plural, which should remind us that there are more types of healing than just physical, and that healings can outwork differently in different people and situations.

MIRACULOUS POWERS — of course, healings would usually come within this category. However, this is generally understood to be when God enables us to speak or act so as to overrule natural laws—either to protect or help people, to confirm the proclamation of the Gospel, or just to demonstrate His power.

PROPHECY — declaring the mind and heart of God by speaking or acting as prompted by the Spirit. This is the most frequently mentioned (and most encouraged) of the gifts of the Spirit, and we will devote a later session to it.

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN SPIRITS — the ability to discern whether a spirit that is operating through a person is a human spirit, a demonic spirit, or the Spirit of God, and to weigh words, deeds, or motives accordingly.

SPEAKING IN DIFFERENT KINDS OF TONGUES — speaking to God or people in a language, whether earthly or angelic, that has not been learned by the speaker. It is different from the personal gift of tongues (discussed in the previous session) because the intention is that others hear it and are edified by it, which will require its interpretation.

THE INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES — the supernatural ability to interpret a message in tongues into the language of the hearers.

The interpretation (and, therefore, the message in tongues) may be a prayer, a revelation, knowledge, a prophecy, or a word of instruction ([1 Corinthians 14:6](#)). Although tongues and interpretation are separate gifts, Paul does say that the person bringing the tongue should pray for the interpretation ([1 Corinthians 14:13](#)). God may have us move in more than one gift, and we should never limit what He can do through us.



One might ask why God would use tongues at all, rather than just having the contribution come directly in a language that everyone can understand. Scripture doesn't specifically address this question, but perhaps one of the reasons is that the bringing of a message in tongues captures the attention of those present in a way quite unlike any other contribution, and often stirs sensitivity to the voice of God in many present. It can also provide a great example of the body of Christ working together by the leading of the Spirit.

DESIRING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

There is much misunderstanding on the subject of the “availability” of spiritual gifts—what we can rightly aspire to and what initiative we can or should take. What is clear is that we cannot choose or “work up” gifts, nor do we earn or achieve them. It is God who sovereignly gives them:

“All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He gives them to each one, just as he determines.”

1 Corinthians 12:11 (NIV 1984)

Of course, it is not wrong to ask God for gifts; in fact, we are commanded to do that (**1 Corinthians 14:1**)! However, we want to be led by the Spirit even in our asking, and we must realize that God will only give what He wants to give, when He wants to give it, and in the measure He wants to give it.

Scripture does seem to allow for the concept of the impartation of gifts through the laying on of hands—for example, in **2 Timothy 1:6**, where Paul reminds Timothy to fan into flame the gift of God which was in him through the laying on of Paul's hands. However, in our opinion, this still does not give the person laying on hands the liberty to “impart” a gift purely of their own initiative or at the request of the person for whom they are praying.

GROWING IN GIFTING

As we also see from that verse, we can and should “fan into flame” the gift of God within us. We can do this by praying, reading what Scripture has to say about the gift, looking to biblical and other examples of those who moved in the gift, spending time with those who currently move in that gift, and, of course, stepping out in it.

The regular use of a gift, taken hold of by faith, may lead to the recognition of a particular “ministry” (area of service/anointing) connected to that gift, and even to an “office.” For example, one prophesying regularly might ultimately be recognized as a prophet in the **Ephesians 4:11** sense of the term. More on that in a later session.

THE PURPOSE OF THE GIFTS

In all of this, we must remember the purpose of the gifts and the motivation we should have in reaching for and seeking to exercise the gifts. In **1 Corinthians 12:7 (NIV 1984)** Paul says, **“to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good”** (with the sense that it will bring everyone together), and in **1 Corinthians 14:12 (NIV 1984)** he says, **“since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.”**

“NOW TO EACH ONE THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SPIRIT IS GIVEN FOR THE COMMON GOOD.”

1 Corinthians 12:7 (NIV 1984)



It is clear in Scripture that everyone must do what God has called and equipped them to do if the Church is to be built up and built together to maturity (see also, by way of further example, [Ephesians 4:7-16](#)). With the exception of the personal gift of tongues, we are not to seek gifts for ourselves, but rather in order to build others up, strengthen the church, and glorify God.

“What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.”
[1 Corinthians 14:26 \(NIV 1984\)](#)

THE MOST EXCELLENT WAY

In connection with the above reminder, we must not make the mistake so many Christians have made over the years, focusing on [1 Corinthians 12](#) and [14](#) but ignoring [1 Corinthians 13](#), or treating it as a separate subject. (Of course, many more have focused on [1 Corinthians 13](#) and ignored the other two!)

The gifts are to manifest God—not just His power and will, but also His nature. He is love ([1 John 4:8, 16](#)), and we misrepresent Him if we exercise the gifts of His Holy Spirit outside of love. The gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit (of which love is the foremost part) should be inseparable in our lives.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE WORLD

Finally, we must not forget that the Holy Spirit is not just at work in the Church, but also through the Church as it reaches out to the world.

POWER EVANGELISM

We have already looked at the Holy Spirit’s role in bringing conviction to the unbeliever and how essential it is that He empowers us to be witnesses. Beyond this, we see that gifts of healings, miracles, and words of knowledge are not just for the blessing of believers, but can play an important part in people coming to faith in Christ. Jesus Himself said:

“Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.” [John 14:11-14](#)

Jesus referred to miracles as an authentication of who He was and His ministry, and as a means of bringing glory to God (see also [John 10:25](#) and [Luke 7:20-23](#)). It was the same for Paul:

“...my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.” [1 Corinthians 2:4-5](#)

“So they [Paul & Barnabas] remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.” [Acts 14:3](#)

It should be the same for us. We are called not only to declare the Gospel but also to demonstrate it.

WE HAVE RECEIVED POWER!

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,” [2 Peter 1:3](#)

Jesus promised that we would receive power by the Holy Spirit. His power is indeed all we need in order to be who we are called to be and to do what we are called to do. So, let’s live in the fullness of Him—every day!

RECOMMENDED READING

1. *1 Corinthians*, Chapters 12-14
2. *Romans*, Chapter 12
3. *Joy Unspeakable: Power & Renewal in the Holy Spirit* by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones
4. *You Shall Receive Power: Receiving the Presence of the Holy Spirit into Your Life* by Derek Prince