

The Christian's Guide



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Luke 2:25-30, John 14:26, John 15:26, 16:12-14, Rom. 8:4, 1 Cor. 12:10.*

Memory Text: “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” (*John 16:13*).

The death of Jesus for the sins of the world is the most important of all truths. In contrast, what else really matters? And because it is so important, God hasn't left it up to us to try to figure it out on our own. Instead, we have been given the promise of the Holy Spirit, which will guide us in our understanding of this truth. For this reason, in the end, no one will have an excuse in the day of judgment.

Indeed, the Spirit is a gift from God to us as fallen beings. Without the death of Jesus, there would have been no salvation for anyone; at the same time, without the Spirit to guide, regenerate, and empower us, there would be no personal salvation. Jesus and the Spirit are knit into One in order to bring humanity, lost in the wilderness of transgression, back into the presence of the Father. It is the Father's plan to restore, through Jesus and the Spirit, the peace and harmony that reigned between God and humanity before the entrance of sin.

This week we'll look a little more at the crucial operation of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 27.*

The Spirit, a Guide

“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”
(*John 14:26*).

As an ambassador speaks in the name of his home government to a foreign government, so the Spirit will speak to men and women in Jesus’ name and with His authority. Jesus has perpetuated His earthly teaching ministry through the Spirit. “The Lord Jesus acts through the Holy Spirit.”—Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 282.

In addition to teaching, what else will the Spirit do? *John 14:26*.

“It was not until after Christ’s ascension to His Father, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the believers, that the disciples fully appreciated the Saviour’s character and mission. After they had received the baptism of the Spirit, they began to realize that they had been in the very presence of the Lord of glory. As the sayings of Christ were brought to their remembrance, their minds were opened to comprehend the prophecies, and to understand the miracles which He had wrought. . . . His lessons, which they had but dimly understood, now came to them as a fresh revelation. The Scriptures became to them a new book.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 507.

What other promises does Jesus give us regarding the Holy Spirit?
John 14:17, John 15:26, 16:12-14.

The Spirit is a living, personal Teacher. Every time we open the Bible, it is possible to have the Spirit unveil to us the true meaning of what we read. The key to this is daily to surrender ourselves to the Lord, asking Him to open our hearts and minds to truth, whatever it is, wherever it may lead us. In such circumstances the Holy Spirit can surely guide.

Ask yourself how open you are to the teachings of the Holy Spirit. Do you listen to Him, or do you make excuses in order to do your own thing?

Key Text: *John 14:26*

Teachers Aims:

1. To explore the meaning of an experiential faith.
2. To show the importance of testing everything we learn of God by making sure it is in harmony with Bible teachings.

Lesson Outline:

I. Following the Holy Spirit's Guidance (*John 16:13*)

- A. The Holy Spirit gives us the words we need to answer for our faith.
- B. The Holy Spirit helps us to make our decisions in accordance with God's will.
- C. The Holy Spirit reveals God's character through us by His power.

II. Testing All of the Spirits (*1 John 4:1*)

- A. God tells us to test the spirits and even tells us how to test them.
- B. The Bereans were praised for testing the message of the apostles with the Scriptures.
- C. The Holy Spirit will never contradict the Scriptures.

Summary: When we experience a living and vibrant faith, we live with the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome and to serve. Yet we must be sure that it is the Holy Spirit, and only the Holy Spirit, that we are relying on. God encourages us to test everything that we learn of Him. We can do this only with the Bible. Let us not be like King Ahaz (*Isa. 7:10-12*) and reject the Lord's challenge. It is for our benefit that God gives us this instruction, for we are easily led astray, and sometimes it is so subtle that we don't even realize it.

COMMENTARY

Introduction

Given to impart genuine spiritual life and power for service, the Holy Spirit is our Guide, Teacher, Sanctifier, and Source of victory over all sin. The more closely we study God's Word with a resolve to obey it, the more richly and extensively the Spirit can work in our lives.

I. The Spirit, a Guide

God is not coercive. If we are humbly receptive to the truth, the Spirit will guide us unerringly into all truth. He will teach us with grace and compassion and not drill us like soldiers. Heaven-bound saints do not need to be "pulled into line," but are cheerfully and speedily compliant with all God's wishes, knowing that everything

Flesh and Spirit

Read Romans 8:4. Write in your own words what you believe Paul is saying. Focus specifically on what walking “after the Spirit” means. See also Rom. 13:14, Gal. 5:22-24.

The Christian chooses not to follow his or her own impulses and gratify his or her own inclinations but to follow, instead, the biddings of the Spirit. The dedicated follower of Jesus will never do anything without seeking the advice and guidance of God. “Lord, what do You want me to do?” is the question the Christian continually asks.

Neither is the Christian to dwell in the realm of mere belief or theoretical faith. Our faith will be experimental rather than theoretical. Under the guidance of the Spirit, the heavenly mind-set of belief will be poured into the earthly mold of action and behavior.

Yet, however much the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives is a miracle of faith, it doesn’t just happen automatically. Few of those who have given their hearts to Christ and have been baptized in the Holy Spirit suddenly find themselves living pure, sanctified lives without diligent effort on their own part. Here is where people make a mistake: Not to rely on your own works for salvation, or even not to rely on your strength in the battle against sin, isn’t the same as not having a daily struggle with self and the flesh. The battle is there, and real, and it will require suffering on our part in order to be victorious. The good news, however, is that we have been promised victory through the indwelling Spirit.

Read 1 Peter 4:1, 2. What is the message there for us regarding the battle against the flesh?

Is there some specific sin that you struggle with that causes you a great deal of suffering in the flesh as you seek to overcome in Christ’s name? What practical things can you do, on a daily basis, that could make you more open to the power of the Spirit in order for Him to give you the victory that is yours for the asking?

He teaches and requires is for our best good and highest happiness.

“Provision is made by God Himself for every soul that turns to the Lord, to receive His immediate cooperation. The Holy Spirit becomes His efficiency.

“It is the Spirit’s power that we need. This can do more for us in one minute than we can ever accomplish by talking.

“Only to those who wait humbly upon God, who watch for His guidance and grace, is the Spirit given. The power of God awaits their demand and reception. This promised blessing, claimed by faith, brings all other blessings in its train.”—Ellen G. White, *My Life Today*, p. 47.

II. Flesh and Spirit

Unlike pagan philosophy, Scripture does not teach that our bodies are intrinsically evil. God created us with a body of flesh (*Gen. 2:7, 2 Cor. 4:11, Gal. 2:20*), possessing senses, organs, and faculties that are all to be used to His glory (*see Phil. 1:20-24*). He calls our bodies the temple of the Holy Spirit who sanctifies our lives (*see 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 2 Cor. 6:16-7:1*). Scripture also uses the word “flesh” as a metaphor for the fallen, carnal nature. In this sense the flesh is said to strive against the Spirit. (*See Gal. 5:17 and Rom. 7:23, 8:5-12.*) That is to say, our carnal nature is antagonistic to God and intensely resistant to Him. The Spirit, on the other hand, strives (to our benefit) against our fallen natures to subdue them to the will of God, thus bringing our physical being into harmony with the will of God. This does not mean that our fallen nature is rendered extinct in this life, so that we have “holy flesh,” but that we reckon ourselves dead in practical reality to our sinful propensities. Accordingly, we do not nurture or coddle our fleshly natures, but crucify them through Christ and come increasingly alive to Him and in Him. (*See Rom. 6:6-19, Gal. 2:20.*) If we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfill the passions of the flesh (*Gal. 5:16*).

III. The Spirit and the Word

God’s Spirit and the Scriptures are integrally connected. The Holy Spirit never reveals anything that is at variance with the Bible, for “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (*2 Tim. 8:16*), and is the touchstone of all spiritual manifestations and experience, and of all doctrine. Never will the Spirit supersede Scripture, for the Spirit and the Word eternally agree in one. God’s Word is truth and His Spirit is truth. (*See John 17:17, 1 John 5:6.*) He imparts the effectual force of divine life to “every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (*Matt. 4:4*). Clothed with the power of the Spirit and the Word, we are enabled to fight the good fight of faith, going on from strength to strength, victory to victory, and grace to grace. (*See John 1:16, Eph. 6:10-17.*) God’s Spirit, guiding us through the Word, protects us against fanaticism, bigotry, false doctrine, spiri-

The Spirit and the Word

“Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17).

The Word of God is here called the sword of the Spirit. It was the Spirit that inspired the written revelation, since “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. 1:21). This is an important point that all Christians must always keep before them. God promises us His Holy Spirit, but we are also given warnings.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:10, 1 Timothy 4:1, and 1 John 3:24–4:1. What’s the message here for us?

The fact of the matter is, there are lots of various spirits out there teaching all sorts of doctrines. Even in the Christian church, strange beliefs, not to mention strange practices, are promoted by those who claim to have been inspired by the Holy Spirit. Though, in some cases, the deceptions and counterfeits are so obvious it’s amazing anyone can fall for them; in others, the deceptions can be quite subtle, promoted by people who might be kind, loving, gentle, even sincere. How, then, can someone ultimately test the spirits, whether they be of God or not?

What do these texts teach us about the ultimate test of whether or not teachings are inspired by the Holy Spirit? Ps. 119:105, Isa. 8:20, Luke 10:26, 16:29-31, Acts 17:11, 2 Tim. 3:15-17.

John Calvin admonishes: “We ought zealously to apply ourselves both to read and to hearken to Scripture if indeed we want to receive any gain and benefit from the Spirit of God. . . . But lest under his sign the Spirit of Satan should creep in, he would have us recognize him in his own image, which he has stamped upon the Scriptures. He is the Author of the Scriptures: he cannot vary and differ from himself. Hence he must ever remain just as he once revealed himself there.”—John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* I, 9:2 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960).

What kinds of spiritual deceptions have you encountered? How did the Word of God protect you? Be prepared to share your answer with the class.

tual lassitude and religious tyranny. (See Acts 20:28-30, Eph. 4:8-16.)

IV. The Work of the Spirit

“Heavenly intelligences are waiting to co-operate with human instrumentalities, that they may reveal to the world what human beings may become, and what, through union with the Divine, may be accomplished for the saving of souls that are ready to perish. There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart and lives a life wholly consecrated to God. All who consecrate body,

Inductive Bible Study

Texts for Discovery: *Galatians 3:2-5; Philippians 2:12-16; Hebrews 11:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 1 John 2:22*

- 1 The Holy Spirit guides us in our conduct and in our understanding of the Scriptures. Why, then, do people still disagree on points of behavior, doctrine, and biblical interpretation? How can we know whether or not we are rightly guided if the guidance we receive seems to differ from the guidance others claim to have received?
- 2 One of the flaws in English and other Western languages is confusion over the difference between faith (experiential) and belief (intellectual). As a result, some might conclude that they can put their “faith” in one compartment and the rest of their life in another, with no interaction between the two. Why is this wrong? What is the role of intellectual belief?
- 3 The Spirit-guided life is not effortless. Our negative or destructive impulses do not suddenly disappear or somehow become sanctified. We still struggle against them. What is the role of our own efforts in these struggles, and what is the role of the Holy Spirit?
- 4 Everything the Holy Spirit does in our lives points us—and others—to Jesus. However, people may sometimes manage to achieve good or even “spiritual” things without glorifying or drawing attention to Jesus. Is it possible for apparently good, positive things to become stumbling blocks in the absence of Jesus? Explain your answer.
- 5 How does the Holy Spirit speak to us through the Scriptures? How is it possible for the Scriptures to legitimately say something to one of us personally that it may not say to others?

The Work of the Spirit

Read John 16:14. What does Jesus say the Holy Spirit will do?

The work and purpose of the Spirit are centered on Jesus. He does not call attention to Himself, but He directs the attention to Jesus. The litmus test of any alleged workings of the Spirit in believers or organizations is the place they accord Jesus. If they call attention to and glorify self or humanity, and even magnify humanity's spiritual experience, they lack the insignia of the Spirit.

The Spirit was not to present His own ideas or notions but only what Jesus taught. Jesus said, "He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (*John 16:14*).

Being the Spirit of truth, He will especially bear witness to Jesus, who is the Truth (*see John 14:6*). And it is only through the Spirit's speaking directly to our hearts that we ever come to a true and living knowledge of Jesus Christ and bear fruit for His glory.

What are other ways the Holy Spirit can glorify our Lord? *John 15:8, Gal. 5:22-25, Eph. 5:9.*

As believers, one of the greatest ways to bring glory to God, both before people and angels (*1 Cor. 4:9*), is by the lives we live, the characters we form, and the way we treat others. These actions and attitudes come through the work of the Holy Spirit in us; to the degree that we cooperate, to the degree that we are willing to die to self and to surrender to God's will, to that degree the Lord can work in us "both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (*Phil. 2:13*). How crucial for all who profess the name of Jesus to live daily in an attitude of faith, thanksgiving, and surrender to His Spirit.

Look at your own life in the past 24 hours. What things did you do that brought glory to God? What things brought shame? What changes do you need to make?

soul, and spirit to His service will be constantly receiving a new endowment of physical, mental, and spiritual power. The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command. Christ gives them the breath of His own Spirit, the life of His own life. The Holy Spirit puts forth its highest energies to work in mind and heart. Through the grace given us we may achieve victories that because of our own erroneous and preconceived opinions, our defects of character, our smallness of faith, have seemed impossible.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 159.

V. An Example of the Spirit’s Guidance

Simeon was receptive to the Holy Spirit’s direct guidance and

Witnessing

Deception . . . falsehood . . . illusion. Highly negative words that raise suspicions as to what is *really* true and what is only a decoy used to lure someone away from the actual thing. This description is dead-on for describing the methods used by humanity’s greatest enemy, Satan, in creating ingenious ways to ease God’s people away from Him. Satan is the master deceiver, the one who can, and most certainly does, create smokescreens in order to blur and distort God’s simple truths. So, how can Satan be stopped in his tracks?

It’s essential we stay in daily communion with our heavenly Father. Prayer and Bible study on a regular basis cement our relationship with Christ and leave no room for Satan to wedge in and chip away at the cement.

Prayer must be intentional. We must develop a real need in our hearts not only to speak with God but allow Him to speak with us. He will, if we give Him the chance. We also need to *listen* to Him. The Father already knows the innermost secrets of our hearts. While He invites us to lay these personal issues before Him any-time, He also wants us to give Him the opportunity to *respond* to us. He isn’t able to do that as effectively if our communion with Him is one-sided.

Also required for a spiritually healthy Christian is daily Bible study. It’s a powerful way of staying well grounded and focused on heaven rather than distracted by Satan’s temporary attractions. Not only are we able to personally benefit from prayer and Bible study, we’re able to reach out to others and to share the blessings. While it might be a bit challenging at first to begin a neighborhood Bible study group, listen to the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit; He’ll lead you gently as you make the Word of God available to those in your community. What we must avoid at all costs is a creeping immunity to the urging and nudging of the Holy Spirit. His quiet voice is one we must listen for and obey without pause!

An Example of the Spirit's Guidance

Read Luke 2:25-30 and then answer the following questions:

How did Simeon know when to go to the temple in order to find “the Lord’s Christ” (*vs. 26*)?

What in these texts reveals why Simeon was so open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit? What’s the important message for us in there?

What was the significance of Simeon’s prayer; that is, what was he doing through it? *See John 15:26, 16:14.* Why is this point the key in understanding the work of the Holy Spirit?

Notice, too, the words of Simeon, under the inspiration of the Spirit, to Mary. What gift of the Spirit was being manifest here? *See Rom. 12:6, 1 Cor. 12:10, 13:2.*

Simeon, obviously, enjoyed such an intimate relationship with God that the Spirit told him to go to the temple on the day the child Jesus was being dedicated. From among the several boys who were being dedicated to God that day, he was led to choose Jesus, who, from all outward appearances, surely didn’t look any different from any other baby. Meanwhile, the officiating priest did not recognize Jesus as the promised Messiah; apparently, unlike Simeon, he was not susceptible to the promptings of the Spirit. But Simeon recognized Him because God showed him who was “the Lord’s Christ.” Some of the other boys whom Simeon bypassed might also have been born in Bethlehem as the firstborn child to mothers who were of the tribe of Judah. But only Simeon’s intimate acquaintance and communion with God through the Spirit enabled him to interpret the factual prophetic pieces of information and recognize in Jesus the Promised One of God.

revelation concerning the identity of the little “peasant boy” of Nazareth as the true Messiah (*see Luke 2:25-35*). Simeon walked by faith and not by sight. His vision pierced beyond the veil of the seen to discern the glorious mysteries of the unseen. So may we, according to the measure of our faith, if we walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh. (*Consider 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; 4:18.*)

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: When cutting lumber, a guide can be set so that every piece of wood cut is the same size. What other things have you made using a guide or pattern? How is your use of a pattern similar to the work of the Holy Spirit? Read John 16:12-14. In what ways does the Holy Spirit help our lives conform to God’s desires for us?

Thought Questions:

❶ Simeon was “moved by the Spirit” (*Luke 2:27, NIV*) to recognize the world’s Redeemer in the Infant whom Mary brought to the temple. How might the biblical record be different if Simeon had disregarded the Holy Spirit’s prompting? Review the past week of your life. Did you sense the Holy Spirit asking you to speak with or to call someone to offer encouragement? How did you respond? What happens when we ignore this gentle guidance? Spend some time with God asking Him to help you be more aware of the Holy Spirit’s still, small voice.

❷ If you made a list of all the things you have learned through life experiences or through the pursuit of education, how long would it be? How much have you forgotten? Jesus said the Counselor would “teach you all things” and even “remind you of everything I have said to you” (*John 14:26, NIV*). Discuss what God desires us to know and remember. Why are these things important? How would you explain to a friend what you have learned about God and His value in your everyday life?

Application Question:

Describe the most perfect thing you have ever seen. Would it be easier to draw it or write a poem about it? Do you wish you had taken a picture of it (or, if you did, is the picture displayed in your home or office)? How do the beautiful things of this earth compare with the heavenly things God invites us to experience? How do we discern the difference between the blessings God wants to encourage us with now and the enticements the adversary uses to distract us? Journal your thoughts and then make plans to share them with at least one person this week.

Further Study: Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 703–705; *The Great Controversy*, pp. vii, viii, 467–469, 607–610; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 52–55; *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 357–361.

“Even the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart is to be tested by the Word of God. The Spirit which inspired the Scriptures, always leads to the Scriptures.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 43.

Concerning the statement in John 16:14 that reads “He [the Spirit] shall glorify me,” Ellen G. White says: “In these words Christ declares the crowning work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit glorifies Christ by making Him the object of supreme regard, and the Saviour becomes the delight, the rejoicing, of the human agent in whose heart is wrought this transformation.”—*My Life Today*, p. 49.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 As a class, go over your answer to Tuesday’s final question. What are some of the spiritual deceptions people have faced? What things have you learned that could be helpful to others?
- 2 Take two people: One has very good theology but is mean, nasty, vindictive, and judgmental; the other, though theologically suspect, is kind, loving, forgiving, and generous. Which one do you think is revealing more of the Holy Spirit in his or her life? Be prepared to defend your answer.
- 3 How should the church respond to someone who, acting rather strange, claims to be moving under the guidance of the Holy Spirit?
- 4 What can you do, as a class, that would bring glory to God? Does it take something fancy, some loud production, in order to do this, or can you, as a group, in a quiet and simple way glorify your Lord? If so, how so?