



Building Together, Part One

Foundations of Faith

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Scribbles & Scribes Ink
6341 Shelby 150, Suite A
Bethel, MO 63434

Phone 660-284-6230
Fax 660-284-6366
Web Site Address:
www.scribblesandscribes.com



God's Word

Loving the Father's Voice

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3: 16–17

Chapter One

Objective:

After studying this lesson, we hope that you will read God's Word and hide it in your heart. May you yearn for it, learn from it, follow it, and love it all the days of your life.

Introduction:

Children love the sound of their father's voice. Shortly after birth a baby responds to that sound and as the child grows, he begins to accept both discipline and direction from the same voice that brings delight. As children of God, we delight in His voice, which is easily heard through His written Word—The Bible.

The Bible is God's Word to us on earth. Although we can see evidence of God's work in His creation, that is an imperfect representation, *Romans 1:19-20*. Only God's written Word can fully show us the truth about sin, our need of salvation, God's willingness to save, and Jesus Christ the Savior. It contains the facts about heaven, hell, and the life to come—and clearly directs us in our lives today.

The Purpose of the Word

Although it is evident that the purpose of the Bible is to reveal God to us more perfectly, its more precise purpose is to reveal God's Son, Jesus Christ:

And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all, Ephesians 1:22-23.

...beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself, Luke 24:27.

Obviously, the New Testament is centered in Christ, yet Jesus is saying here that the Old Testament has as its central theme and

purpose, the revelation of the coming Christ. The continuing thread of redemption, from Genesis to Revelation, illustrates the unity of a volume which contains 66 books, penned by 40 men over a span of 1600 years. In the midst of those circumstances, the unity of the Bible is easily explained. It was all written by one Author.

Divine Inspiration

The Bible is the Word of God. It does not “contain” the Word, and it is not “part of” the Word—it is the written Word of God. Therefore, we can read it as truth and believe it without any fear of error. Without the Bible, we would each be left to make God in our own image. If only part of the Bible were true, we would be left to the whims of man’s constantly changing theories and thoughts about “which parts are true?” But, God has not left us in such shadows. He has assured us without a doubt that all of the Bible is Divinely Inspired. Paul, writing to Timothy, says that *all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, Second Timothy 3:16.*

The word “inspiration” used here does not refer to “being inspired” in the way artists, painters, and novelists tend to view it. Men were not moved by mere emotion or thoughts to pen words of their own creation. Nor was the Bible a mechanical dictation from God to man. Rather, men did research, had deep conversations, wrote down their own experiences, and received direct revelation, all overshadowed by the Creator God. In the end, the Word He intended before the foundation of the world was released in the earth. Because of this Divine overshadowing,

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the entire written Word of God is both infallible and inerrant (incapable of error).

Any discrepancies arise merely from the minds and words of those who are ignorant of what the written Word says, or who have misinterpreted it, or who have limited its authority, subjecting it to human thought, decision, theology, or tradition. Jesus says of such people, *You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God, Matthew 22:29.*

We do not have to live in that kind of confusion, because we know that the scriptures speak life and strength into the lives of believers everywhere. The proper Biblical view is that the scriptures are the authority, given by inspiration of God, and they are our objective basis for faith and practice.

Jesus and the apostles recognized the Old Testament as the inspired Word of God, and they recognized that it was speaking of Jesus. They believed it and staked their lives on it. In fact, the Old Testament was the only Bible Paul had when he wrote to Timothy about the inspiration of God's Word. Referring to the Old Testament, Jesus said that it "cannot be broken" and it "must be fulfilled," *John 10:35; Mark 14:49; Luke 24:44.*

Besides these statements about the Bible, Christ's life, death, resurrection, and ascension prove it to be true. The apostolic writings of the New Testament were also recognized long before they were recorded in a book known as the Bible. Referring to his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul said, *...you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God... First Thessalonians 2:13.* Paul told the Corinthian church, *If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord, First Corinthians 14:37.*

Effective and Eternal

The Bible is the Word of Life. James 1:21 tells us to ...*receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.* That Word which is able to save our souls is also eternal. The New Testament writers make that point by quoting the words of Isaiah the Prophet—*All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord abides forever,* First Peter 1:24; Isaiah 40:6-8.

The Word is Sure

And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation... Second Peter 1:19-20.

These words in Second Peter were recorded by men who had walked with Jesus on a day-by-day basis, yet they talk about a “Sure word of prophecy.” The Word is to be acted upon and believed, beyond what we may see, think, or feel.

Every word of God is tested. He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words lest He reprove you, and you be proved a liar; Proverbs 30:5-6.

The Word is Alive

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God, John 1:1.

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And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and Truth, John 1:14.

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword... Hebrews 4:12.

The Bible is not a dry, dusty textbook. Nor is it an interesting historical account, although history and education can easily be found in its pages. Scripture describes the mystery of the fact that the Word is actually alive. It is the same Word that Jesus breathed forth at the creation of the world, the same Word that God spoke to part the Red Sea, the same Word that God uttered to call forth Jesus from the grave, and the same Word that God uses to communicate with His Church today. It is never old or dull. Rather, aged saints who have loved to turn its pages every day for many decades, testify that they continue to find fresh breaths of life with each reading. It can be the same for us when we learn to love the Word of God and devour it as our daily bread.

Check Yourself

This exercise is designed to help you measure your familiarity with and understanding of the Bible. The number of questions you can answer correctly is not a test of your spirituality or your love for God, but the results will help you target areas that need improvement for the sake of growth.

List as many books of the Old Testament as you can, in order.

Check Yourself

List as many of the books of the New Testament as you can, in order.

Check Yourself

Match the following people from the Bible with appropriate people, places, or events.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="text"/> Moses | A. Tarsus |
| <input type="text"/> Abraham | B. The destroyed walls of Jerusalem |
| <input type="text"/> Rahab | C. Mordecai |
| <input type="text"/> Jacob | D. Barak |
| <input type="text"/> Philip | E. Egyptian Plagues |
| <input type="text"/> Joseph | F. Lions |
| <input type="text"/> Ruth | G. Fiery Furnace |
| <input type="text"/> Esther | H. Fifteen more Years of Life |
| <input type="text"/> Deborah | I. Condemned Jesus to Death |
| <input type="text"/> Daniel | J. Stoned to Death |
| <input type="text"/> Shadrach | K. Coat of Many Colors |
| <input type="text"/> Hezekiah | L. The Hebrew Spies |
| <input type="text"/> Nehemiah | M. The Sacrifice of a Son |
| <input type="text"/> Pilate | N. Angels on a Ladder |
| <input type="text"/> Stephen | O. The Eunuch |
| <input type="text"/> Paul | P. Naomi |

Check Yourself

Fill in the blanks.

- A. The earth was created in _____ days.
- B. _____ built the ark.
- C. When he was three months old, _____'s parents hid him in a basket among the bulrushes.
- D. Mary and _____ were Lazarus's sisters.
- E. Among Jesus' disciples was _____, who was a tax-gatherer.
- F. The Holy Spirit came down with power in Jerusalem on the Day of _____.
- G. God's plan from creation until now has been to build His _____ upon the earth.



Jesus

Meet the Master of the House

Chapter Two

Objective:

Meeting and loving Jesus is a heart experience, not an intellectual exercise. However, through this brief over-view of His life and character, we hope to build within each believer an understanding of who He is and what He desires for His Church. The goal and objective of any discussion concerning the Savior is quite simple — that we might fall more and more in love with Him.

Meet the Master of the House

Forgiveness in the Old Covenant was pointing toward the New Covenant that would cover once and for all.

Introduction:

If we are intent upon becoming members of the household of faith or the family of God, it is imperative that we meet, come to know, and learn to love the Master of that House. No one can function as a family member if they are not well-acquainted with the Head of the House, recognizing His voice, and understanding His heart.

We Need a Savior!

In the beginning God created man in His own image and placed him in a garden which was perfectly arranged and appointed to provide full fellowship between God and man, *Genesis 1:26-31*. God gave a simple command to mankind in the garden which was to refrain from eating of the tree which held the knowledge of good and evil. They disobeyed, *Genesis 2:16-17* and as a result, they suffered death—separation from God, *Genesis 3:24*.

This knowledge of good and evil then polluted the lives of men and women. They became slaves to sin, with no ability to break free from its power, and this sin-nature was passed on to all of mankind from that day forward, *Romans 5:12-19, Romans 7:18-20*. Man became helplessly estranged from God—The Father and Creator of us all.

Jesus is the Answer

Early in the Bible, God begins to point to a way of salvation. He initiated a sacrificial system in the Old Testament which allowed

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men to make amends for their sin through the shedding of animal blood. Yet, that sacrifice was never pure enough to purge the sin of mankind. It merely set the pattern for a perfect sacrificial lamb which was to come, *Exodus 12:3; John 1:29; Hebrews 9:22.*

Jesus was born of the virgin Mary in the town of Bethlehem, just as the prophets had foretold, *Micah 5:2; Isaiah 7:14.* A member of the Triune Godhead (*see lesson number four*) Jesus left the glory of Heaven and emptied Himself to be born a man, pure and undefiled, able to take on the sins of the world and die so that we might live. His mother was an ordinary woman, under the same curse as Eve which made Him fully man. Yet, the original sin-nature of Adam did not pass through His bloodline, because His father was the Holy Ghost, making Him fully God, *Romans 5:12, 19; Luke 1:35;*

Matthew 1:18.

He grew up like any other little Jewish boy in those days. Throughout His life, Jesus faced the same trials, tribulations, and temptations that we face each day—yet He lived without sin. As capable as you or I of choosing to sin, He chose not to, *Hebrews 4:15.* His human, sinless blood, therefore, was the pure price for our justification before God, *Romans 5:9.*

Through His death and resurrection, Jesus became the first-born of many brethren. He openly defeated Satan, stripped him of his power, and broke his authority over death, *Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14-15; Revelation 1:5.* He also brought us back into the abiding relationship with God which was designed in the Garden of Eden, *Second Corinthians 5:21.*

We find His plan through prayer, His Word, godly counsel, etc.

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He is Lord

O Lord, Thou has searched me and known me. Thou dost know when I sit down and when I rise up; Thou dost understand my thought from afar. Thou dost scrutinize my path and my lying down, and art intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, O Lord, Thou dost know it all. Thou hast enclosed me behind and before, and laid Thy hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high, I cannot attain to it.

Psalm 139:1-6 KJV

Many believers stop at this point and are satisfied to know Jesus the Savior. But the Bible describes another step in this relationship which brings us to a more intimate place with Him and allows us to fulfill the destiny He has prepared for us in this life. That step is called discipleship, and it involves coming under the Lordship of Christ.

And why call me “Lord, Lord” and do not the things which I say, Luke 6:46.

If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it, Luke 9:23-24.

The term “savior” is used 37 times in the Bible, while the term “Lord” comes up 7,736 times. That makes it clear where God’s emphasis lies.

Our Part

When we decide to come under the Lordship of Jesus, we surrender. We give up all rights, privileges, and expectations for our own lives and bow in total submission to Him. That means we are no longer free to make life choices that suit only our own interests or whims. Issues like where to attend college, what job to pursue, or which person to marry become matters that are prayerfully submitted to God—the One Who is in charge. His answer may come in a number of ways. He may speak through His Word, through a time of prayer, through the counsel of friends, or through a directional prophetic word. No matter what vehicle He uses, God

will make His will known in our lives if we pause to listen. As disciples, we follow the example of Christ, like children who want to be just like our father when we grow up. We not only believe what He says, but we do it without argument or complaint. Our lives become nothing, and His life in us becomes everything.

Those who refuse to submit to such Lordship are unruly children, bearing the family name but not carrying forth the family mission. It is like a teenager who decides to view his home as a motel and his parents as roommates so that he can “do his own thing” and pursue his own course. Coming under Lordship or the rule of Christ is not just a good idea—it is the gospel. Anything else is simply a watered-down salvation message which presents Jesus as a personal valet or celestial Santa Claus, rather than the ruling Head of His Body, the Church.

God's Part

Even though following Jesus Christ as Lord is a decision that we make, it is impossible for us to do so in our own human power. God provides both the grace and the ability for us to believe and follow Christ, *Matthew 19:24-26; Ephesians 2:8; Second Peter 1:3; Philippians 2:13.*

The grace of God makes it possible for us to abide in Christ at all times and to joyfully follow His principles, precepts, and pattern in all that we do, or think, or say. That grace calls us to sit at the feet of Jesus and bask in His presence until we finally are able to know as we are known, *John 10:14-15; Psalm 139.*

Check Yourself

Spend a Day With Jesus In Capernaum

When you meet a new friend and want to get acquainted, it helps to know where they work, who their family is, and what they do for fun. We get to know Jesus the same way we become friends with anyone else, by spending time with Him. The following activity will take you on a spiritual treasure hunt to catch a glimpse of what one day in the life of Jesus and his friends might have been like.

Jesus has just returned from his first ministry trip in Judea and Samaria and seems to have sent his six disciples back home for a time. During a meeting in his hometown of Nazareth, Jesus is soundly rejected by the people, who turn their backs on this “son of Joseph.” Afterwards, Jesus loads up his mother and his family and moves them to the city of Capernaum in Galilee, which will become the central headquarters for his next preaching tour. We join him early in the morning shortly after his arrival, walking along the sea.

With the early light of day, Jesus makes contact with some important people in his life once again, and he issues them a challenge and a command. Look at Matthew 4:18-22 to discover that _____, _____, _____, and _____ all got a new job description and life vocation before breakfast!

Later in the day, Jesus and the four disciples made their way to the local synagogue, where Jesus immediately assumed the role of honored rabbi and began to teach. His teaching,

Check Yourself

however, was interrupted by someone who recognized exactly who this new rabbi was. Turn to Mark 1:23-24 to find out that it was _____ who announced that Jesus was the Holy One of God.

Jesus handled that interruption in typical fashion and went on with his teaching. A large crowd had observed this scene, and the news of Him began to spread. After this exhausting synagogue service, Jesus and the guys attempted to retire to Peter's house for lunch. But when they arrived they discovered that _____ (Luke 4:38-40) was sick. Jesus dealt with this problem using the same authority He had exercised in the synagogue, and eventually the meal was served.

The afternoon may have been spent visiting with friends, or communing with the Father, or simply allowing the physical man to rest briefly. But look at Mark 1:33 to learn that

_____ had gathered at the door by supper time!

What a day! Yet Jesus didn't stop. Moved by the compassion of the Father, He walked among them as daylight turned to dusk and then to dark, healing their diseases and casting out their demons.

And finally, in Mark 1:35 we find Jesus arising before daylight, going out into a lonely place, and was

_____ there. Come, let us follow Him.



The Godhead

Discovering the Ultimate Relationship

Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Chapter Three

Objective:

The goal of this lesson is to provide an overview of the doctrine of the Trinity and to see the importance of that relationship in the life of the Church.

The Godhead

Discovering the Ultimate Relationship

Introduction:

In Christianity there are preferences, things we are willing to compromise on for the sake of brotherhood. For example, I won't eat meat if it causes my brother to stumble, *First Corinthians 8:13*. Then there are convictions—things we are willing to die for. Paul said that anyone who preached another gospel than that of Jesus Christ should be cursed, *Galatians 1:6-8*. Among those convictions that we would die for is the doctrine of the Trinity. Nearly every cult or heresy which has arisen among mankind centers around a wrong interpretation of or total disbelief in the Three-in-One Godhead. The doctrine of the Trinity is not an abstract Biblical truth which Christians have chosen to believe out of tradition or instruction. Rather it is the deep conviction and revelation in which the Church places Her hope.

Three-In-One

God is one. *The Lord our God is one Lord, Deuteronomy 6:4.*
He is the first and the last; there is no God besides Him, Isaiah 44:6.
He is not an egg which can be divided into three parts, although that is the closest analogy our finite, human minds have been able to come up with. The analogy does not hold true because Jesus is all God, not just His yoke or His shell. The Holy Spirit is all of God, and God the Father is all of God. They are the mighty, mysterious Three-In-One, which we can not comprehend. Yet, we know that it is true. The same adoration, love, devotion, and confidence that we express to the Father we also ascribe to the Son and to the Spirit.

The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are three distinct Persons. They address one another in the Scriptures and refer to one another as “He” and “Him.” But they are still one, and they personify the ultimate relationship. Before the dawn of time, God Himself existed in relational form. He created the world in relationship, and He reigns on high in relationship. As the Mighty Three-In-One, God formed man from the dust of the earth and said, *Let us make him in our image, Genesis 1:26.*

Different Functions

Although the Three are one and are equal in power and glory, They do operate differently. The Father operates through the Son, and both the Father and Son operate through the Spirit. *Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works, John 14:10. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you, John 14:26.*

All three Persons of the Trinity are present when One Person acts. For instance, the Son created the world. So did the Father and the Spirit. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being, John 1:1–3.* Even so, certain acts or conditions are associated with individual members of the Trinity. The Father calls, the Son redeems, and the Spirit sanctifies.

Ultimate Relationship

One of the most wonderful pictures of the Trinity in action takes place at the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River. When Jesus came up out of the water, the voice of the Father thundered with approval from the heavens, and the Spirit swooped down from on high in the form of a dove, as if He had been hovering in eternity awaiting the moment of reunion with the all-man, all-God Son, the Savior of the World, and Creator of the Universe. What a reunion! What a relationship.

And so by His very existence as a Triune Being, God has illustrated the need for relationship. Surely if the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are one—the Church ought to be the same. How can the Body be made of different stuff than the Head? Such unity will come only as we endeavor to know Him more perfectly, love Him more completely, and reflect Him more accurately in our lives. In the meantime, we stand firm by the conviction of the ages:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, the Maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, only begotten, begotten of the Father; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten and not made, consubstantial with the Father; by whom all things were made whether in heaven or on earth; who for us men and our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate and became man, suffered, and rose again on the third day, ascended into heaven, and will come to judge the living and the dead. And we believe in the Holy Ghost who is the Lord and giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets...

— From the Nicene and Constantinopolitan Creeds

Check Yourself

Answer the following questions in full sentences.

Write a brief essay explaining why you would not compromise your conviction that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one.

At one point in time each of the individual members of the Trinity has “walked” among men. Describe these three different time periods.

Read Genesis chapter 1 and John 1:1-4. Explain the individual functioning of the three members of the Trinity contained in these passages.

Check Yourself

In the following scriptures decide which individual member of the Trinity is most clearly at work. Explain why you think so.

Numbers 21:8-9 • The serpent in the wilderness

Exodus 24:12-18 • Moses receiving the ten commandments

Genesis 37:5-10 • Joseph's dreams

Exodus 15:20-21 • Miriam singing a new song

Genesis 14:17-20 • Abram meets Melchizedek

First Samuel 16:23 • David drives the evil spirits from Saul

Luke 1:64 • Zechariah's tongue is loosed

Matthew 2:22-23 • Joseph and Mary return to Nazareth

Matthew 27:51-53 • Graves opened at Jerusalem

Genesis 22:1-14 • Abraham and Isaac

Matthew 17:5 • Mount of Transfiguration

Acts 1:8 • The day of Pentecost

Acts 8:39 • Philip translated



Repentance and Forgiveness

Finding the Key To Enter the House

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

First John 1:9

Chapter Four

Objective:

As a result of this lesson, we hope you will discover how repentance and forgiveness work as vital elements in the life of a disciple.

Repentance and Forgiveness

Finding the Key To Enter the House

Introduction:

Repentance is the voluntary turning away from sin. We begin to teach this concept to our children as soon as they are old enough to say the words “I’m sorry.” Nothing mends a broken relationship between siblings faster than a sincere apology, some honest tears, and a promise to never tie the tail of your sister’s cat to a deflating balloon again. By God’s grace and His grace alone, we receive a gift of repentance which allows us to feel sorrow for our sin in the first place and then empowers us to turn from it. When we experience His forgiveness, a tremendous weight lifts from our hearts, and we rejoice in His mercy. Just as He has forgiven us, so we are commanded to forgive others. Repentance and forgiveness are foundational elements in our lives. *Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God... Hebrews 6:1.*

What Repentance Means

The first word of the gospel is “repent,” and the second is “believe,” *Mark 1:15*. It was the first message preached by John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, the twelve disciples, and the apostle Paul, and it was the first message given on the Day of Pentecost when the Spirit came in power and thousands of converts were added to the Church, *Matthew 3:1-8; Matthew 4:17; Mark 6:7-13; Acts 2:38; Acts 20:20-21*.

Repentance is a change of heart and mind from sin and selfishness, to devotion to God. It takes place when we realize that we are living in a totally hopeless life of sin, and we determine to turn from that to God. Repentance will cause change in a number of areas in our lives. It is an internal action which results in external consequences.

Things Will Change

Our thinking will change when we repent. We suddenly realize that certain behaviors, actions, and attitudes we once viewed as harmless are actually sinful and unacceptable by a holy God, *Romans 3:20*. That realization will bring sorrow or sick-in-the-pit-of-my-stomach feelings about the way we have lived, *Second Corinthians 7:9-10*. That sorrow, in turn, leads us to true salvation and the forgiveness of God. Then our entire purpose in life changes, and we set our hearts to fulfill God's plan and purpose, not our own.

Repentance causes us to understand that we cannot hold grudges against one another and expect God to forgive our own sins. If we come to worship God and remember that we have wronged someone, we need first to go and repent, *Matthew 6:14-15; 18:23-35*.

The final change as a result of repentance will come in the form of confession. Our words will change. We will no longer justify our wrong attitudes or blame others for our wrong actions. We will quickly repent of those sins and confess them to God, and if the Spirit prompts us, we will also speak to individuals about sins we have committed against them.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness, First John 1:9.

What Repentance Is Not

Repentance is not conviction or a feeling of guilt. A child may feel conviction when his father points out the broken window and that feeling may lead to repentance for the deed, but they are not the same thing. A person can feel guilty without moving to repentance.

Nor is repentance sorrow. Lots of people want to cry on the pastor's shoulder and tell him how sorry they are that life is going so badly. Yet they never repent. Abusive spouses tell their battered partners how sorry they are after every beating, but that never prevents the next explosion. The Bible tells us that many are sorry for their sins but never turn from them, *Second Corinthians 7:10*. True repentance brings change along with sorrow.

Deciding to “do better” is not repentance either. It does not work like an easily-broken New Year’s resolution. Performing some religious action, like the scribes and pharisees did, is not the same thing as repentance, *Matthew 5:20*. Repentance is a spiritual condition of the heart, *Matthew 5:3*.

How It Shows

John the Baptist called for converts to show “fruits in keeping with repentance.” In other words, if a child really repents about tying the cat’s tail to a balloon, he won’t do it any more! Some of those fruits include the following:

- Godly sorrow for sin—*Second Corinthians 7:9-11*
- Confession of sin—*Psalms 32:1-5, First John 1:9*
- Forsaking of sin—*Proverbs 28:13*
- Hatred of sin—*Revelation 2:6*
- Restitution where possible—*Luke 19:8, Leviticus 6:1-7*

Faith and Forgiveness

The gospel message is “repent and believe.” These two elements cannot be separated; they are part of one another and take place together. As a believer repents and believes, he turns from a life of selfishness to a life of faith and trust in Jesus, who took our sins upon Himself and paid the penalty for them. The convert then partakes of Christ through repentance and faith and takes on His forgiving nature in relationship with others, *Matthew 6:12-15; Acts 26:18; Ephesians 1:7; First John 1:9; 2:1-2,12.*

Check Yourself

Look at the life of King David and write a brief essay about one incident in which he experienced repentance.

Now look at the thief who died on the cross beside Jesus. He experienced repentance, forgiveness, and faith also. Write a brief explanation of how his experience differed from David's.



Faith

Opening the Gift

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

Chapter Five

Objective:

This lesson is designed to foster a greater understanding of what it means to have true faith toward God and to discover what happens when God's people rely upon that kind of faith.

Introduction:

Faith is the foundation of Christianity and the basis of our relationship with God. Faith is not a “pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstrap” mentality. Instead, it is a relationship word. It is a little girl jumping from the side of the swimming pool into her Father’s arms. Having faith simply means that we believe *that God is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him, Hebrews 11:6.*

Question: Can we separate “Regular” faith from the Spirit Gift of Faith found in First Corinthians 12:9?

Saving Faith

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, KJV Hebrews 11:1.

Faith links us with God and is the assurance that the revealed things promised are true and that the unseen things are real. Faith is certain that what it believes is true and what it expects will come. Like a child who knows that his father will come home at the end of the work-day, though he sees nothing to prove that. Faith is not wishful thinking—it is a hope that looks forward with utter certainty.

Yet, there is a faith or belief that does not save. The demons believe and tremble, but they are not saved, *James 2:19.* Many people have mentally agreed that God exists and even that His Word is true, but they refuse to obey Him or trust Him with their lives. So, just believing is not enough. Rather, faith is “...a certain conviction wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit...” (Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pg. 503).

Finding Faith

Faith comes from the Word of God, *Romans 10:17*, and it is a free gift. The Holy Spirit working with the Word, gives birth to faith in our hearts, *Acts 8:26-39*.

It can come to us in a variety of ways, including the following:

- The Word spoken in creation—*Genesis 1; John 1:1-3; Psalms 19; Romans 1:18-20*
- The prophetic Word—*Second Peter 1:20-21*
- The written Word—*Luke 24:44*
- The Living Word, Jesus Christ—*John 1:1-14*

Abraham the patriarch is one of the most vivid examples of the faith that we can find. In fact, he is known as “the father of the faith.” By studying his life, we can learn that he:

- heard the Word
- found hope for the future in the present
- refused to accept the contrary evidences of his senses
- did not waver in his commitment
- rejoiced in the Word as an accomplished fact

Hebrews 11:8-15; Romans 4:9-11

Faith not Feelings

Faith is based on the Word of God and not dependent on the way we feel. In fact, we should trust our feelings only when they agree with the Word. Although historical facts such as the Biblical genealogies or geographical information may be believed without any particular emotion, many faith experiences such as conversion include great outpourings of feeling. These emotions are not the

evidence of faith. Rather, they are the product of faith, *Acts 16:34; John 14:27; First Thessalonians 1:3; Acts 2:44-46*. When the Holy Spirit moves within a person, there will be an appropriate response.

The Focus of Faith

Saving faith is God-centered. It is not a false confidence placed in people, things, events, or angels but in God alone. Jesus authors the faith in our hearts, and He completes it, always pointing to the Father of Lights in whom there is no shadow of change, *James 1:18; Hebrews 12:2*.

Check Yourself

To learn more about some fellow members of the Household of Faith, upon whom our lives have been built, turn to Hebrews 11 and fill in the blanks to discover what action faith took in these individual lives.

Abel _____

Enoch _____

Noah _____

Sarah _____

Joseph _____

Jephthah (*use a concordance or topical index*)

Barak (*use a concordance or topical index*)



Baptism in Water

Identifying with Christ

Chapter Six

Objective:

This lesson is not designed to clear up all misunderstandings about baptism, nor to establish a new tradition. It is a brief introduction to and overview of the subject. The Holy Spirit will guide us in the rest.

Baptism in Water

Identifying with Christ

Introduction:

Water baptism has been a controversial subject throughout most of the history of the Church. Early in the life of the Church, people began to add formula, ritual, and requirements to this event which were not present in the New Testament descriptions. Like family traditions which are passed down through generations until the original meaning and intent are forgotten, baptism became an elaborate ritual involving lengthy preparations and teachings.

Jesus was baptized. His constant attitude during His life on earth was reflected by the writer of Psalms who says *I delight to do Thy will, O my God: Thy Law is within my heart, Psalms 40:8*. Jesus restates that attitude several times in the scriptures, such as the time the disciples were urging him to eat and he said *my food is to do the will of Him who sent me, John 4:34*.

It was that delight in doing the Father's will that brought Jesus to the banks of the River Jordan where John was baptizing converts. John's baptism was coupled with repentance, and Jesus was without sin, yet he submitted Himself to it because, *it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness, Matthew 3:15*. That baptism and the experiences which followed were the initiation of His public ministry and the evidence of His clear conscience before God, *First Peter 3:21*.

Surely, if the Messiah Himself was subject to this rite, we should have no question as to whether or not the experience is valid and necessary. It simply remains for us to understand something of the reasons why.

Symbolic Meaning

Water baptism is a symbolic, yet real spiritual experience. It is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. We enter the waters of baptism and stand before God as those who are dead in our transgressions and sins, *Ephesians 2:1*. Then, as dead men, we are buried beneath the water, just as Jesus Christ was buried in a tomb following His death on the cross, *Romans 6:3-4*. But He doesn't leave us there! The hands of the brethren lift us up, and we break the surface of the water and begin to breath air once more. In that moment, we are experiencing the wonder of a resurrected life. Now we identify with Jesus in His resurrection on the third day, and we begin to live a new life in Him, *Colossians 2:12; 3:1*. Through baptism, we are identifying ourselves with Christ. The experience is not merely symbolic of His resurrection, but it shows that we have been raised to a new life now!

Who, How, When, and Where

Who should be baptized? All who believe! *But when they believed... the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. Acts 8:12*. The book of Acts is filled with baptismal accounts, *8:36-38, 16:31-33; 18:8* and it was a regular part of daily life in the New Testament church. The apostle Paul, *Acts 9:18; Lydia, Acts 16:14-15*; the Philippian jailer and his house, *Acts 16:33*; and the Corinthian believers, *Acts 18:8* were all baptized. In fact, the apostles commanded it, *Acts 2:37-41; Acts 10:44-48*. Baptism was so clearly related to conversion in the New Testament that they were often thought to be one event.

Notes

While it is apparent that this is an act of obedience necessary for believers, the scriptures are also clear that baptism is not the means of salvation. Only the blood of Christ can accomplish that. As Jesus hung on the cross, two men hung beside him. One was full of cursing for this “King of the Jews,” but the other one rebuked the scoffer, saying that although they deserved the punishment of death, Jesus did not. Then with his dying breath the criminal said, *Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom, Luke 23:42.* In that moment, the man expressed repentance, faith, and confession—all the elements of conversion. Yet, it was impossible for him to be baptized. Jesus' response lays to rest any question about baptism and salvation, because He offered this assurance to His companion in death, *Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise, Luke 23:43.*

These elements—repentance, faith, and confession—are necessary for baptism. Since infants cannot participate personally in repentance, faith, or confession, the question of infant baptism is also easily answered. Children, however, can and do experience these things, often at an early age.

The where and how of baptism are questions which often lead to discussion and disagreement. In fact, the Body of Christ has been divided on this issue because some people see the “where and how” questions as essential to a valid experience. But scriptures describe a variety of situations and solutions. Philip was on a dusty, desert road when he met the Ethiopian eunuch and began to explain to him about the Messiah. After hearing these words of life, they came upon some water and the Eunuch asked to be baptized. Then the scriptures say that both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, *Acts 8:34-39.*

Notes

The account of this baptism, as well as the baptism of Jesus, would seem to indicate immersion as the method. But the most significant issue in this story seems to be the heart of the man who asked for baptism and the gracious provision of God who created water in the desert—that it might be fulfilled. We stand firm in our belief that the heart of a man's baptism is more important than his mode.

We practice baptism by immersion—But we do not invalidate other methods, since the real issue is a person's faith. Often people ask to be rebaptized because their faith and understanding have grown, and they want to experience a more meaningful expression of their faith. We are glad to accommodate that hunger. Yet, we do not require that everyone who wants to join our local church be rebaptized by our methods.

Check Yourself

Write a brief account of your own baptism experience. Be specific about the place, the people, the emotions, and the impact on your life. If you were very young, it may be helpful to talk with someone else who was there to recall details. If you have not yet been baptized, write about how this lesson has affected your thinking on the subject.



Communion

Partaking With the Family

...the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread: and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

First Corinthians 11:23-25

Chapter Seven

Objective:

Like baptism, communion has become a point of division in the Kingdom rather than a place of unity. This lesson is not meant to add to that debate, but to discover what the Bible says about "The Lord's Table."

Communion

Partaking With the Family

Introduction:

The family dinner table is an almost-sacred place in many households. No one is allowed to miss supper because it is a time of reflection, refueling, and relating in the family. It reminds us of who we are and to whom we belong. The communion of the saints has similar purpose and significance. The book of Exodus describes a time when God sent horrible plagues on the Egyptian people in order to convince Pharaoh that he should release the Hebrew nation from bondage and allow the people to return to their land of promise. Pharaoh was unrelenting, however. So, before the final plague of death to the firstborn in every house, God spoke to Moses about a Passover Feast. He gave detailed instructions concerning the slaughter of a perfect lamb from among the flocks. Each family was to prepare the lamb for roasting, and they were commanded to smear the blood of the lamb on their doorposts.

And the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt, Exodus 12:13.

Then the death angel flew over the land, and the firstborn in the land were all struck down—from the first-born of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the first-born of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of cattle, Exodus 12:29. But, no one died in the Hebrew homes. They were covered by the blood of the Lamb.

A New Covenant

Centuries later, the Jewish people continue to celebrate this Passover, in remembrance of what God has done. Jesus and the disciples were in the midst of that Passover celebration during the Last Supper when He broke the bread, took the cup, and explained to them about His body and His blood, *First Corinthians 11:23-25; Hebrews 9:13-14*. Suddenly, a new covenant had been established, a new ordinance had been given.

When you do this, do it in remembrance of me. No longer the death angel, who could only spare for a season those who were under observance of the Law, but now *Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, John 1:29.*

That is why we observe communion. He gave us a command for these reasons:

- To remember Him, *Luke 22:19-20; First Corinthians 11:24-25.*
- To proclaim the Lord's death until He comes, *First Corinthians 11:25.*
- To remember our deliverance from sin, *Exodus 12:42; Hebrews 9:14.*
- To share in the body and blood of the Lord, *First Corinthians 10:16.*

At His Table

The Bible does not speak of communion as a private matter. Although believers experience a personal communion or relationship with God, the coming together at the table of the Lord for the breaking of bread and taking of the cup is a corporate experience. It

Notes

has to do with both our relationship with God and our relationship with one another. The Corinthian believers were admonished strongly for their negligence and mishandling of communion, *First Corinthians 11:20-22*; and they were instructed to examine themselves and judge the body rightly, *First Corinthians 11:28-29*.

These scriptures indicate that, like baptism, communion is open to all who have repented and believed. The Bible actually has little to say about how communion should be taken. No matter how often we partake or what method we use, we are to approach His table in this way:

- with a desire to participate, *Luke 22:14-15*.
- through faith, *Hebrews 11:6*.
- remembering Christ, *First Corinthians 11:24-25*.
- giving thanks, *Luke 22:17*.
- as a caring member of the Body, *First Corinthians 10:17, 11:33*.
- with personal examination, *First Corinthians 11:28*.

Check Yourself

Because it is necessary to come before the Lord with a pure heart, look at Matthew 5:23-47 and examine some of the traits such a heart displays.

1. If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you ... do these three things:

_____ your offering, be _____
then _____.

2. _____ with your opponent at law...

3. You shall not commit adultery, even in your _____.

4. Let your _____ be _____ and your _____ be _____.

5. Love your _____ and _____ those who persecute you.

6. For you are to be _____ as your heavenly Father is _____.



The Person of the Holy Spirit

Who He Is and What He Is Doing

And it will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. And even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

Joel 2:28-29

Chapter Eight

Objective:

The book of the Acts of the Holy Spirit is still being written. The prophecy in Joel continues to be fulfilled, and will continue for generations yet to come. Because of that, it is vital that we understand Who He is and What He is doing in our day.

The Person of the Holy Spirit

Who He Is and What He Is Doing

Introduction:

This Old Testament scripture in the book of Joel was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when those who were waiting in Jerusalem for the Spirit received Him with power. The Book of Acts could easily be called the Acts of the Holy Spirit, because many of its chapters recount the activity of the Spirit in the life of the new believers. The Holy Spirit is seen throughout the Old and New Testament, often in a subtle light. One of the earliest New Testament accounts of His obvious presence comes at the baptism of Jesus, when John sees Him rend the heavens and rush down upon Jesus the man, bringing with Him the approving voice of God the Father. This is a thrilling account of the Trinity being reunited for the first time since Jesus came to earth as man.

It is also one of the key examples of the Holy Spirit as a person. A God-person, but a person nonetheless. Those who have experienced the indwelling of His life, the comfort of His presence, the wisdom of His counsel, and the surging of His power will gladly attest to this fact. The Bible itself declares Who He is and describes His personality in several distinct ways.

- He possesses knowledge—*First Corinthians 2:9-11*
- He exercises a will—*First Corinthians 12:11*
- He has a mind—*Romans 8:27*
- He loves—*Romans 15:30*
- He gives instructions—*Nehemiah 9:20*
- He grieves—*Ephesians 4:30*

He is also seen in the Bible through a variety of symbolic pictures such as the following:

- Fire—*Isaiah 4:4; Acts 2:3; Matthew 3:11*
- Wind—*John 3:8; Acts 2:2*
- Water—*John 7:37-38; First Corinthians 10:4*
- Oil—*Matthew 25:3; Psalms 89:20; First John 2:27*
- Dove—*Matthew 3:16*

Seen In the Life of Jesus

As believers, we pattern ourselves after Jesus Christ, the Head of the Body. Therefore, we must understand how the Spirit worked in His life. Jesus Christ was conceived and born of the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed the virgin Mary, *Luke 1:35*. He was then filled with the Holy Spirit after His baptism in water, *Luke 3:21-22; John 1:32-34*.

He was also “led of the Spirit”—a concept we tend to associate with ooey-gooey feelings and unstructured, spontaneous reactions. Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted, *Luke 4:1*. The Spirit had a specific destination and purpose which had been set before the foundation of the world. He leads us in the same way.

Once Jesus returned from that experience, He began to minister by the Holy Spirit. Sitting in the synagogue, He addressed the people with this quote from Isaiah, *The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord. Luke 4:18-19*.

Much of Jesus' recorded ministry deals with casting out demons. When the Pharisees questioned the source of His power to do so, He told them, *I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, Matthew 12:28.* Even more awesome than casting out demons, Jesus offered Himself for our atonement through the eternal Spirit, *Hebrews 9:14.*

Following His crucifixion, Jesus was raised from the dead by the Holy Spirit—the same Spirit which dwells in us today, exercising the same power, *Romans 8:11.* Shortly before He ascended into Heaven, Jesus gave the apostles whom He had chosen commandments through the Spirit, *Acts 1:2.* Then He ordered them to wait in Jerusalem until they, too, had received the Holy Spirit, *Acts 1:7-8.*

Working of the Holy Spirit In Our Lives Today

Today the Holy Spirit continues to move and work in specific ways in the life of believers. The following is a partial list of His work.

- He convicts.
- He draws.
- He takes part in regeneration and salvation.
- He comforts.
- He teaches.
- He baptizes, empowering us to be witnesses.
- He bestows spiritual gifts, separate and distinct from salvation.

Check Yourself

1. The Holy Spirit baptizes believers with Himself over and over again in their lives. Turn to Acts 4:31 to answer the following questions.
 - a. Who were the people gathered in this verse for prayer?
 - b. Was this the first time they had encountered the Holy Spirit?
 - c. What did they begin to do as a result of the Holy Spirit making Himself known?
2. The baptism of the Holy Spirit does not follow a traditional sequence of events. Read Acts 10:43-48 to answer the following questions.
 - a. To whom was Peter preaching?
 - b. What happened first, water baptism or Holy Spirit baptism?

Check Yourself

3. The baptism of the Holy Spirit brings a fruit that is obvious.
Read Acts 19:1-6 to answer the following questions:
- a. Why do you think Paul asked the question in verse 2?
 - b. What visible manifestation took place when they were "baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus?"
 - c. Compare this to Matthew 3:11-12. According to this scripture, what is the difference between John's baptism and Jesus' baptism?



Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Part One Edifying the Family

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

First Corinthians 12:4-7

Chapter Nine

Objective:

This study is designed to help each member of the Body recognize and rightly exercise the gifts of the Spirit in the context of the local church.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Part One: Edifying the Family

Introduction:

In order for a household to function properly, each member must contribute their unique gifting. Mothers are gifted with the ability to nurture and “mother.” Fathers are gifted to lead and to mold. Each child then adds a personality and character, which all comes together to create a family. Local churches work the same way. God has bestowed specific gifts upon His people in order that His Body might be complete.

The Baptism In the Holy Spirit

Just as water baptism speaks of a total immersion of the body into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, so the baptism of the Holy Spirit represents a total immersion of the believer. The Bible also describes this baptism as “being filled” *Acts 2:4*, “receiving” *Acts 8:17*, “falling upon” *Acts 11:15*, “pouring out” *Acts 10:45*, and “coming upon” *Acts 19:6*. He is a gift, *Acts 2:38* and He is a promise with which we are sealed, *Ephesians 1:13*.

The initial promise of the baptism was given by the prophet Joel, and He is foreshadowed in the teaching of John the Baptist in the New Testament. Jesus Himself talks about “the Promise of the Father” who will not leave the disciples alone after Jesus’ death and resurrection, but will abide with them forever, *Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4*.

The Purpose of the Spirit In the Believer's Life

Just as the Spirit came to Jesus with a Divine purpose, so He comes to us. When we have yielded to Him, and He has filled us, we will see remarkable changes in our life.

- We will discover power to be witnesses—*Acts 1:8, 4:31-33.*
- Our worship will arise to another level as we are aided by the Spirit—*John 4:24, First Corinthians 14:15.*
- He will help us in our prayer life—*Romans 8:26-27.*
- We will find new life and understanding in the scriptures—*John 14:26.*
- God's guidance will become clear—*John 16:13, Mark 13:11.*
- Our ability to bear fruit will increase—*Galatians 5:22-23.*
- We will be able to operate in Spiritual gifts—*First Corinthians 12:7-11.*

Manifestations

Some people respond to the manifestations of the baptism in the Holy Spirit the same way they respond to a mother who puts spinach on their plate. Do I have to speak in tongues? This question sometimes arises because the convert believes that he was filled with the Spirit at conversion. Certainly it is true that no one can come to the Father unless the Spirit draws him, but according to gospel accounts, the baptism is a distinct empowering experience that is separate from repentance and believing in Christ.

This is demonstrated in several passages, especially in the Book of Acts. During the initial outpouring on the Day of Pentecost, they all spoke in tongues, *Acts 2:1-4.* While many have attempted to

explain this phenomenon away as a one-time outpouring, it continues to be described in the New Testament. The people of Samaria received the Holy Spirit when Peter and John laid hands on them, *Acts 8:4-25*. The apostle Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit three days after his dramatic conversion on the Damascus road, *Acts 9:17-18*. Although the scriptures are not clear what manifestation was present to make the filling known, it is clear in later writings that he often spoke in tongues. These accounts go on and on. In each instance something specific, visible or audible, takes place so that those who are observing have no doubt but that the Spirit has fallen.

The Problem With the Tongue

James describes the tongue as our most unruly member, unable to be tamed by men. Certainly we can verify that by experience. It is not surprising, then, that God would choose to tame the most unruly member of the body in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is the final surrender of ourselves to Christ. The question, then, is not, “Do I have to speak in tongues?” The question is, “Why don’t you want to?”

Check Yourself

Use the time normally allotted for this self-test to pray with those who have not yet received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, or to instruct students in how to pray for others to receive.



Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Part Two

Edifying the Family

Chapter Ten

Objective:

To discover the purpose for the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the Church, and to help each individual believer find their place and function in the use of these gifts.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Part Two: Edifying the Family

Introduction:

God has given many different gifts to His Church, and they are to be viewed as gifts, not talents. A gift is given purely by the grace of God, and it is bestowed upon the person of His choosing, through no merit of their own. Several different, though overlapping gifts are mentioned in Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and First Corinthians 12. In Romans 12 we see different “Body gifts” such as mercy, giving, and so forth. Ephesians 4 talks about five ministry gifts—apostles, prophets, teachers, pastors, and evangelists. This lesson focuses on a third category, which we call gifts of the Spirit.

The Place and Purpose

These gifts are given “for the common good.” Although they are manifested in and through individuals, all mention of the exercising of these gifts in the Bible is given in the context of the local church, *First Corinthians 12:7*. This means that a believer must be properly fitted to the church, a part of the household of faith, in order to both minister and receive the full benefits of the gifts of the Spirit. God expects the gifts to operate and be governed in the church, which will strengthen the whole body. This also ensures that things are done properly and in an orderly manner, *First Corinthians 14:40*. The gifts of the Spirit are not the playthings of an independent ministry; they belong to the Church.

Revelation Gifts

If we can put the various gifts from First Corinthians 12 into categories, one such group would include gifts of revelation or special understanding. These include the following:

- **Word of wisdom**—insight given by God for the purpose of a specific situation, *Matthew 10:18-20; First Kings 3:16-28; Acts 6:10*. Example: Stephen speaking before the Sanhedrin, *Acts 7*.
- **Word of knowledge**—specific information given by God which is not known through any natural source, *John 1:45-48*. Example: Jesus with the woman at the well, *John 4:1-42*.
- **Discerning of spirits**—God-given ability to recognize whether the spirit behind an activity is of God, man, or evil spirits, *Matthew 7:15-20; First John 4:1*. Example: Paul and Timothy with the slave girl, *Acts 16:16-18*.

Vocal Gifts

Another category of gifts would include those which are audible to listeners and involve spoken language. These include the following:

- **Tongues**—the ability given by God to speak in a language unknown to the speaker, often called a prayer language. This gift is given both for private prayer and worship, *First Corinthians 14:4, 14-15, 28*. It also brings edification to the whole church when exercised with the complimentary gift of interpretation, *First Corinthians 14:5*.
- **Interpretation of tongues**—the God-given ability to explain what has been spoken in tongues or to interpret it into the language of the listener, *First Corinthians 14:13*.

- **Prophecy**—the ability given by God to speak forth a message from God to His people. Prophecy generally comes without forethought and in the language of the speaker. It often speaks of things to come or confirms things which are already happening. True prophecy will always agree with the revealed Word of God, *First Corinthians 14:6; Acts 11:27-30; Revelations 19:10.*

Power Gifts

The third category of spiritual gifts involves dramatic demonstration or works of power. The Bible says that these gifts are given to confirm the Word of God which is spoken, *Mark 16:20.* These gifts include the following:

- **Faith**—a miraculous assurance in God, given by God, during a time of extreme need or impossible obstacles. This goes beyond the daily faith we walk in, *Acts 3:3-6; 14:8-10.* Example: The widow with the unending oil, *First Kings 17:14-16.*
- **Healings**—the God-given ability to impart healing for the physical body in specific situations, *Acts 9:17-18; Acts 28:8-10.* Example: Peter's shadow falling on the sick, *Acts 5:15.*
- **Miracles**—the God-given ability to perform works contrary to the natural order of things, works which appear impossible to the human mind, *Acts 20:9-12; 9:39-41.* Example: Elijah and the consuming of the wet offering, *First Kings 18:36-38.*

Conclusion

The apostle Paul says clearly that all members of the church are to eagerly desire and to understand these gifts of the Spirit, *First Corinthians 14:1.* When we see the gifts operating properly, we

know that God is at work, strengthening His Church and calling His people. As we begin to operate in these gifts, we must do so in all humility. We must remember that if the gifts of the Spirit are in evidence, but the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—are lacking, then we have become nothing more than a noisy gong and clanging symbol on a drum set, *First Corinthians 13:1-3*. Both the gifts and the fruits are needed if the household is to grow strong.

Finding Your Place

Although we seek the Giver of the gifts and not the gifts themselves, God does want each believer to be equipped. Paul says that we are to seek the gifts earnestly for the building up of the Body. God does not deposit on us a gift of our choosing, but of His. As you begin to draw close to Him in worship and to make yourself fully available to Him for the function of any gift, He will begin to work in and through you for the perfecting of His Bride.

Check Yourself

Read First Corinthians 13:1-13 and contemplate the fact that the gifts must be exercised with love. Then rewrite verses four through seven in your own words, expanding on the meaning and application of the verses as they apply to the exercising of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.