

Acts 1–4

The Holy Spirit, Part 1

☑ **Target: Be empowered by the Spirit!**

Key Verses

Acts 1:8a—But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to Me.

John 14:26—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 things that I said to you.

John 15:26—But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.

Suggested Bible Reading

☐ John chapters 15–21

Other Recommended Reading

☐ *God's Gifts (Get Activated! book)*

Prayer and Praise: "Abide in Me"

John 15:4–5—Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. (5) I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

Dear Jesus, it's amazing the way You take care of me—the way Your strong arms reach down to help me with the difficult things that come up throughout the day. There are so many times that it just doesn't register in my brain to talk to You about what I'm going through, and to bring my troubles to You and let You work them out. I guess I just kind of get so swept along with life and living and into everything that's happening, that I tend to try and "row my own boat."

But, Jesus, I know You want to be close to me. You're the Answer Man with everything that I need. You have the answer to every question, the solution to every problem. You have the love and understanding I need so that I can get along with others.

It's a change for me, and takes some effort to stop and pray, and just talk with You about different things, but please help me to make the effort to put on the brakes and take a little time out to talk to You! Amen.

Meditation: The Holy Spirit and Witnessing

The primary purpose of the Holy Spirit is to give you power to witness.

A lot of people feel a little nervous and shy when it comes to telling others about Jesus; it's just natural. So don't worry if you don't feel very bold or brave. The Lord understands. No matter *how*

you feel, though, He needs us to share His love and the message of salvation with the world, and if we'll just do our part, He'll help us.

You may feel that you don't really know what to say or *how* to witness. Don't worry; you don't have to be a good speaker in order to be a good witness. It doesn't even matter that much what kind of personality you have. Whether you're bold or shy, the main thing that people need to see is God's love shining through you.

If you don't know what to say, just look people in the eyes and smile, give them a tract, and let the Lord do the talking. When you give them His Words, something written down that they can take with them, it'll go far, and it will keep working in their hearts long after you're gone. If they seem interested and want to talk, then listen to what they have to say, and let them know that you really care about them.

You don't have to worry or feel bad, thinking that you're not a good witness. If you're faithful to give out the messages of His love, like tracts and other literature, you'll be giving them a wonderful witness and a chance to know all about Him and His gift of salvation for them.

<To think about> *Which of your friends or family should you tell about Jesus?*

Getting to Know the Bible: The Holy Spirit

Key Chapters about the Holy Spirit

John 14

Acts 2

Romans 8

Examples of being filled with the Holy Spirit

Exodus 31:2–5 (Bezaleel)

1Samuel 10:6,9–10 (Saul)

1Samuel 16:13 (David)

Luke 1:15 (John the Baptist)

Luke 1:41–42 (Elizabeth)

Luke 1:67 (Zacharias)

Luke 2:25–26 (Simeon)

Luke 4:1 (Jesus)

Acts 2:1–4 (Christians on the Day of Pentecost)

Acts 6:3–5,7 (Early Church deacons)

Acts 9:17 (Paul)

Acts 11:22–24 (Barnabus anointed to teach)

What the Bible Has to Say About the Holy Spirit!

In John chapter 14, Jesus promised His disciples that after He left this world, the Holy Spirit would come to help them:

John 14:16–17—And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever. (17) —The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

After Jesus rose from the dead, He appeared to His disciples and told them:

Luke 24:49—Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.

Acts 1:8—But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me.

Obedience brings God's blessing: In Acts chapter 1, we find that the disciples obeyed Jesus. They waited and prayed together. We can read in Acts 2:1–4 what happened:

Acts 2:1–4—Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. (2) And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. (3) Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. (4) And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Why did the Lord send the Holy Spirit? The main purpose of the Holy Spirit is to help us tell others about Jesus, to be witnesses for Him.

Acts 1:8—But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

John 15:26–27— (26) But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. (27) And you also will bear witness.

The infilling of the Holy Spirit can transform our lives.

Acts 4:31—They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness.

When we want to do something for God, then the Holy Spirit can help us to do it. Like this little illustration:

A small boy was trying very hard to lift a heavy object. His father, entering the room and noting his son's struggle, asked him, "Are you using all your strength?"

"Yes, of course I am!" the boy impatiently exclaimed.

"No, you are not," the father answered. "You haven't asked me to help you!"

The Holy Spirit is also a comforter and teacher:

John 14:26—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 things that I said to you.

The word translated as "Helper" in the above verse is translated in the King James Version as "Comforter." The original Greek word used here is *parakletos* which means "called to one's side." It was used in a court of justice to denote a legal assistant, counsel for the defense, an advocate; then, generally, one who pleads another's cause. A wider meaning is "intercessor" or "consoler." Thus "Comforter" actually gives us a closer idea of the original meaning than "Helper."

The Spirit guides us into the truth and helps us understand God's Word:

John 16:13—However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth.

It has been said, "God's mind is revealed in the Scriptures, but it can be very blurry without wearing the eyeglasses of the Holy Ghost." It is the Spirit that brings God's Word to life!

The Holy Spirit gives us power to change when we need to. The fruits of the Holy Spirit fill up our lives with good things:

Galatians 5:22–23—But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (23) gentleness, self-control.

Filled to overflowing

Everyone who has ever received Jesus into his heart has received a *measure* of the Holy Spirit, “being born again of the Spirit” (John 3:8). But to receive the *full* anointing or infilling, or what the Bible calls “*baptism of the Holy Spirit*” (Mark 1:8), is usually a separate experience that happens after you have received Jesus.

A glass of water makes a good illustration: A glass may not be a full glass of water, but if it has some water in it at least it’s not completely empty; it is a glass of water. Well, that’s how a lot of Christians are. They have just a little bit of water, a little bit of God’s Spirit, just enough to save them.

But being baptized with the Holy Spirit is as if the water was poured in till the glass was *filled up and running over!* It is such an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that you fill up and run over! Jesus said,

John 7:38–39 – (38) He who believes in Me, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” (39) But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive.

Peter’s Transformation

The life of the apostle Peter makes an excellent case study of what can happen to someone when he comes under the anointing of the Holy Spirit!

Many things Peter did before he was filled with the Holy Spirit were mistakes, even though he was already a believer in Jesus. After Peter had followed Jesus for three full years, he underwent a tremendous and dramatic change.

Self-confidence followed by denial

In the hours before Jesus was arrested He told His disciples:

Matthew 26:31—All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: “I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.”

Peter replied confidently:

Matthew 26:33—Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.

But Jesus, knowing what was to come, answered,

Matthew 26:34—I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.

Peter still asserted confidently that He would never deny:

Luke 22:33—Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.

That night, when Jesus was arrested, Peter fled. When Jesus was taken away to the palace of the high priest, Peter followed at a distance.

Luke 22:54—And Peter followed at a distance.

When asked if he was one of the followers of Jesus, Peter denied three times:

Luke 22:55–60—Now when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. (56) And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, “This man was also with Him.” (57) But he denied Him, saying, “Woman, I do not know Him.” (58) And after a little while another saw him and said, “You also are of them.” But Peter said, “Man, I am not!” (59) Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, “Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean.” (60) But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are saying!” Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.

From cowardice to courage: How the transformation was made

About one week after Jesus had ascended to Heaven, Peter, along with the other disciples, were filled with the Holy Spirit as they waited praying in an upper room in Jerusalem. On this day, Peter stood in front of the crowds and boldly gave witness for the Lord, resulting in about 3,000 people receiving salvation.

Acts 2:14,38,40–41—But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. ... (38) Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (40) And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” (41) Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

(See Acts 2:14–40 for the full sermon.)

Not long afterwards, a man who was lame from birth was instantly healed by Peter and John, right before the astounded multitudes. When Peter spoke to the huge crowd that gathered to see the miracle, over 5,000 more joined ranks with the disciples. See Acts 3:1–12 for the account of what happened. See Acts 3:13–26 for Peter’s sermon. The results can be seen in chapter 4:

Acts 4:4—Many of them which heard the Word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

In the days that followed, Peter and John faced a wave of persecution from the same religious leaders who had crucified their Savior. But there was no fear, no cowardice this time, no denial! After being arrested and brought before the high priest, Peter spoke with the power of the Holy Spirit:

Acts 4:8—Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.”

Others see the transformation

The power and anointing with which Peter now spoke gave testimony to the change that had come over him:

Acts 4:13—Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

Why did these people marvel? Because they saw that same power *in* His followers that Jesus had when He walked the earth! That’s the same power that each of us can have through the Holy Spirit!

Points to ponder

- In which ways can you relate to what Peter went through?
- After Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit, he was transformed from a coward to a brave man. In which way(s) would you like the Holy Spirit to transform your life?

The promise of the Holy Spirit

Luke 11:9–13—So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!

Getting to Know the Bible: The Psalms

The Book of Psalms is a collection of 150 spiritual songs and poems, used in individual and public worship.

If you want to read something devotional, read the book of Psalms! The Psalms contain plenty of counsel that you can apply today, about your spiritual and everyday lives and spiritual lessons and praise to the Lord, as well as lots of prophecy about the future. Psalms is also a tremendous prophetic book full of Messianic prophecies (prophecies about Jesus) because the greatest Messianic prophet in the Bible aside from Isaiah was King David.

This is how one Bible commentator described this beautiful book:

“King David was the penman of most of the psalms, but some evidently were composed by other writers. But all were written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; and no other part of the Old Testament is more frequently quoted or referred to in the New. Every psalm either points directly to Jesus, in His person, His character, and offices; or may lead the believer’s thoughts to Him. And the psalms are the language of the believer’s heart, whether mourning for sin, thirsting after God, or rejoicing in Him. Whether burdened with affliction, struggling with temptation, or triumphing in the hope or enjoyment of deliverance; whether admiring the Divine perfections, thanking God for His mercies, meditating on His truths, or delighting in His service; they form a Divinely appointed standard of experience, by which we may judge ourselves.”

Psalms that you may like to read

Key Psalms on a variety of topics: 1, 2, 8, 15, 19, 24, 27, 32, 34, 37, 42, 46, 51, 91, 100, 103, 121, 127, 133, 139, 150

Topical selection of Psalms

Messianic Psalms: 2, 16, 22, 41, 45, 68, 72, 110

Praise and thanksgiving: 21, 46, 48, 65, 66, 68, 76, 81, 85, 98, 100, 105, 121, 124, 126, 129, 135, 136, 145, 148, 149, 150

Promises of protection: 23, 46, 91

The Word of God: 1, 19, 119

Life’s experiences

Affliction: 6, 13, 22, 69, 88, 102

Aspiration: 42, 63, 143

Consecration: 116

Conversion: 40

Home: 127

Old age: 71

Pardon: 32

Prayer: 55, 70, 77, 85, 86, 142, 143

Repentance: 25, 38, 51, 130

Teachableness: 25

Trust: 3, 16, 20, 23, 27, 31, 34, 42, 61, 62, 91, 121

Vanity of life: 39, 49, 90

Divine Attributes

Creative power: 33, 89, 104

Infinite knowledge: 139

Mercy: 32, 85, 136

Wisdom, majesty, and power: 18, 19, 29, 62, 66, 89, 93, 97, 99, 118, 147

Faith in Action: “They Shall Bear Thee up in Their Hands”

—A true account of how the Holy Spirit inspires our prayers.

Shirley Halliday opened her Bible. It was a regular part of her daily routine, and this day she especially felt that she needed a word from God. Her work as a nurse was rewarding but tiring, and at times like this she missed her husband the most. He had died only three months ago.

Tonight the house was quiet. Her 13-year-old daughter, Janie, was on vacation with her oldest brother, his wife, and their two children. Shirley read Psalm 91 in her worn King James Bible. She read verses eleven and twelve, “For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.”

Shirley stopped reading and burst into tears, sobbing almost uncontrollably. She felt that Janie was in danger but did not know how or where—only that her daughter was in a situation in which she might die.

Shirley began pleading with the Lord. “I know You never give us more than we can bear,” she prayed, “but I know I couldn’t bear losing my daughter so soon after my husband’s death. I place Janie in Your care.”

Shirley prayed: “I entrust all who are dear to me to Thy never failing care and love, in this life and the life to come, for You know better things than I do for them. O God, I truly place my daughter Janie in Your hands.” She prayed with all the passion of a mother who knows that her daughter’s life is in the balance. Then she claimed Psalm 34:4: “I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.”

Shirley felt the burden lifted from her, then a feeling of peace swept over her. She knew that the Lord had heard her pleas and answered her prayers.

Shirley continued to read Psalm 91. A few verses later she read, “He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him.” It came as a complete confirmation to her. The peace had come even before she had read the promise of God’s answer. Now she praised God with her whole heart.

Miles away, Shirley’s daughter, Janie, was turning to photograph the sights of the Grand Canyon. In the area of the Petrified Forest, anxious for a better picture, she left the family group, climbed over a barrier, and went to the edge of a cliff. The ground was covered with what looked like black ashes. Janie slipped and went over the edge. She plummeted down, frantically reaching for something—anything—to hold onto. There was nothing. The walls of the canyon were black and seemed bottomless. It seemed to the teenager that she would be seriously hurt.

Then she felt a presence. Janie stopped falling, suddenly coming to a complete stop as though she had been caught. Janie put her hand out and felt the slippery wall of the canyon. She tried to turn her body, but all that happened was that she felt herself dropping some more. Carefully trying to edge her way up, she would only slide farther down. It seemed impossible. There was no way she could climb back up, and she was in danger of falling the rest of the way to the bottom.

Janie felt enveloped with the presence. Suddenly she found herself back at the top. She knew that she had not climbed back up on her own. That would have been impossible. She could only explain that an angel had stopped her fall by catching her in his strong arms. She had been lifted to the top on the wings of angels.

Later, not wanting to frighten her mother, Janie did not mention her close call when she phoned home that night. “We’re having a wonderful time, and we’re all okay,” she reported.

“I know you will be safe,” her mother replied. “I’ve placed you in the hands of the Lord.”

At that time neither mother nor daughter told of the experience each had had a short time earlier.

When the family returned home, they were recounting the adventures of their trip. Passing one picture to her mother, Janie recounted her close brush with death and the mysterious rescue.

“When did it happen?” the mother asked.

“The day we visited the Grand Canyon. You know I called home later that night.”

“But exactly when did it happen that day?” Shirley persisted.

The vacationers remembered the time of the accident. It was the exact time that Shirley had made her fervent pleas to God.

Shirley will always remember that day. “It was no coincidence,” she stated with assurance. “It was the Holy Spirit Who let me know that Janie’s life was in danger. When I cried out to God in prayer, He sent His angels to rescue Janie.”

—By Marilyn and William Webber