

Read it when you can, and note how many times Paul points to the “Spirit” as the power behind the Christian life.

Have you made the wonderful discovery of the Spirit-filled life? Are you conscious of the presence of the Spirit in your life? Are you experiencing His life-giving power? Make sure there is no barrier between you and Christ that might prevent Him from pouring out His priceless gift. Open up your life to the greatest power in the universe.

Dear Father: Giver of every good and perfect gift, I praise You today for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. I ask Jesus to come and live in me and fill me with the Holy Spirit. Drive out my old habits, energize me with Your divine qualities. Make mine today a God-guided, Christ-controlled, Spirit-empowered life. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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DISCOVER

MYSTERIOUS POWER IN MY LIFE

In 1929 Frank Morris boarded a ship bound for Switzerland. He'd looked forward to this voyage for some time. But it turned into a humiliating experience. A steward put in charge of his care locked Frank in his cabin each night. After a quick breakfast Frank could exercise a bit, but felt foolish being led around the deck, like an animal on a leash. Then the steward deposited Frank in a steamer chair. Whenever he met a

friendly passenger who invited him for a stroll, the steward objected, saying he had to keep an eye on him.

Frank was an adult, with the normal curiosities and desires of an adult. But he was also blind. The steward assumed he couldn't take care of himself. Frank was treated like an American Express parcel that had to be lugged around.

But in Switzerland Frank's life dramatically changed. While there he learned about dogs which had been especially trained to guide the blind. Bringing a German shepherd named Buddy back to the United States, Frank started an organization called Seeing Eye.

Now, with Buddy at his side, Frank could go anywhere, anytime, with anyone. He felt free at last.

During one demonstration to a group of reporters at a busy cross street in New York City, Buddy guided his master expertly from one lane to the other while cars whizzed past. Because he trusted Buddy implicitly, Frank made it across fine. The sighted reporters had a much more difficult time; one actually took a cab to get to the other side.

In the next few pages we're going to learn about the Holy Spirit, a Guide who wants us to place our lives in His hands. All of us are handicapped by the same human nature, the



IN YOUR INNER BEING, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. . . . Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, ACCORDING TO HIS POWER THAT IS AT WORK WITHIN US.—Ephesians 3:16, 17, 20.

The Spirit-filled life is the way to genuine freedom. Like Frank Morris with his faithful guide dog Buddy, we can, with the Holy Spirit guide inside us, do immeasurably more than we could before. We discover new desires and new abilities. We are enabled to move forward confidently instead of just trying to cope with life's problems.

This Spirit-filled experience is renewed each day through prayer and Bible study. These are the principal tools the Spirit uses to help us grow [as we'll see in guides 14 and 15]. Prayer keeps us in close contact with Christ and the Word of God keeps us focused on His resources. This is how we begin to replace bad habits and attitudes with healthy qualities.

The Spirit-filled life is a gift for every believer. We can all be successful in the Christian life, moving forward at whatever pace God enables us, but moving forward. Romans 8 gives an exciting description of the Spirit-filled life.



Before leaving the world, Jesus instructed His followers,

“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the GIFT my Father promised, . . . For John BAPTIZED WITH WATER, but in a few days you will be BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.”—Acts 1:4, 5.

The word baptize means to immerse.

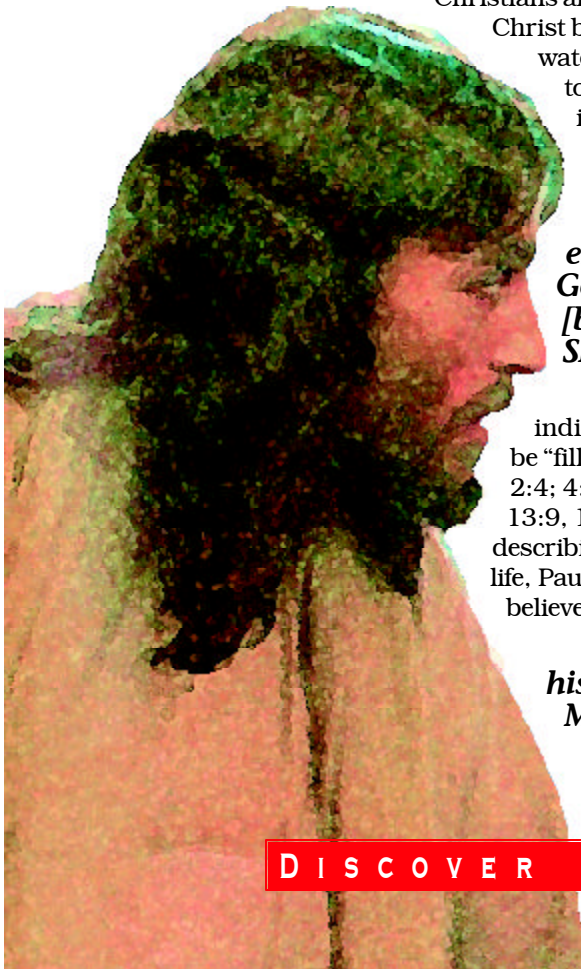
Christians are to confess their faith in Christ by being immersed in the waters of baptism. They are also to be immersed, or baptized, in the Holy Spirit.

Jesus informed Nicodemus:

“No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of [both] WATER and THE SPIRIT.”—John 3:5.

Over and over Scripture indicates that the Christian is to be “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:4; 4:8, 4:31; 6:3, 6:5; 7:55; 9:17; 13:9, 13:52; 19:6). While describing the Spirit-filled Christian life, Paul offered this prayer for every believer:

“I pray that out of his glorious riches HE MAY STRENGTHEN YOU WITH POWER THROUGH HIS SPIRIT



same blindness to what’s really most important. Life rushes by us at such a frantic pace that we often find ourselves just coping instead of going anywhere. Still, we’re hesitant to trust our lives completely to this Guide. We may still want to cross the street on our own. But the discovery that awaits each of us is this: we’ll find real freedom and power by depending on the Holy Spirit to guide us through life.

1. CHRIST’S REPRESENTATIVE IN THE WORLD

When Christ was about to ascend into heaven, His disciples grew apprehensive at the thought of their Master’s parting. So Jesus promised them a priceless gift, a personal Counselor and Guide:

“But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, THE COUNSELOR will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. . . . When He, THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH, comes, HE WILL GUIDE YOU into all truth. . . . HE WILL BRING GLORY TO ME by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.”—John 16:7,13,14. (Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts in the DISCOVER guides are from the New International Version of the Bible [NIV].)

In the divine plan, Jesus needed to return to heaven as our representative before God’s throne and “appear for us in God’s presence” (Hebrews 9:24). But believers can, in a sense, have it both ways. While our crucified Lord represents us in heaven, we also have right here on earth, the Holy Spirit, Jesus’ direct representative from heaven.

While He ministered within the confines of a

human body, Christ couldn't be present everywhere. But the Holy Spirit has no such limitations; He can serve as a personal life-guide to countless individuals in many places at the same time. Christ meets our needs through the Holy Spirit.

2. WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Most of us can relate to God the Father if we imagine the most caring, nurturing parent we have ever known. And we can picture Jesus the Son, because He lived among us as a person. But the Holy Spirit is harder to picture and relate to. We have no easy human comparisons. The Bible, however, does give us specific information about Him:

A Personality. Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as a person, a member of the Godhead, along with God the Father and God the Son:

“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the FATHER and of the SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.”—Matthew 28:19.

The Bible tells us that the Spirit has personal characteristics: a mind (Romans 8:27); wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:10); feelings of love toward us (Romans 15:30); feelings of grief when we sin (Ephesians 4:30); the ability to teach us (Nehemiah 9:20); and power to guide us (Acts 16:6, 7).

Involvement in Creation. The Holy Spirit participated in the forming of our world with the Father and the Son.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. . . . And the SPIRIT OF GOD moved upon the face of the waters.”—Genesis 1:1, 2, KJV.

turning away from a sinful way of life and turning to Christ—as a condition for receiving the gift of the Spirit.

The Spirit is already working in people to lead them to that point: He makes us aware of God's goodness and gives us the desire to turn from wrongdoing (Romans 2:4). He's also involved in the work of conversion (Acts 3:19). What Peter pointed out was that to have the Spirit poured out on us as a gift, to be filled with the Spirit, we must first repent and commit our lives to Christ as is symbolized by baptism.

Jesus stated the same truth in a slightly different way. He emphasized a willingness to follow and obey as a condition for receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit:

“IF YOU LOVE ME, YOU WILL OBEY WHAT I COMMAND. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH.”—John 14:15-17.

The person who claims the gift of the Holy Spirit but continues to live a sinful life is only fooling himself. There is a “wicked spirit” which imitates some of the Spirit's manifestations, leading some to conclude that this “gift of God” condones their immoral behavior.

8. THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

The Holy Spirit makes the life of a Christian fulfilling and beautiful because a Spirit-filled existence fulfills Christ's ideal for us:

“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”—John 10:10.

church:

“And afterward, I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT ON ALL PEOPLE. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit IN THOSE DAYS.”—Joel 2:28, 29.

As history moves to a climax and the final signs appear before Christ’s Second Coming, God will prepare every sincere believer for heaven through a great outpouring of His Spirit. Are you now experiencing the former rain that is preparing the church for the latter rain of the Spirit? Are you living a Spirit-filled life today? As you are empowered by the Spirit, will you let God use you to communicate the news of His incredible love and soon return?

7. CONDITIONS FOR RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit moved those who heard the gospel appeal to cry out, “Brothers, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37).

“Peter replied, ‘REPENT AND BE BAPTIZED, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. AND YOU WILL RECEIVE THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.’”—Acts 2:38.

The apostle Peter emphasized repentance—

3. THE ACTIVITIES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. *Changing the human heart.* Scripture repeatedly describes the work of the Holy Spirit in very personal terms; it is evident that He knows individuals intimately and influences them at the deepest level. In His encounter with Nicodemus, Jesus emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit in changing the human heart:

“Jesus answered, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is BORN OF water and THE SPIRIT.’”—John 3:5.

The Spirit of God once moved on the waters at creation; He now moves in us to bring about our re-creation. To be “born of the Spirit” means that the Spirit gives us a new beginning. It’s more than a matter of modifying our behavior a bit. The Spirit changes us from the inside out, fulfilling the promise: “I will give you a new heart” (Ezekiel 36:26).

2. *Making us aware of wrongdoing and giving us a desire for holiness.* What enables people to acknowledge their sins and take responsibility for them?

“When he [the Holy Spirit] comes, HE WILL CONVICT the world of guilt in regard to SIN and RIGHTEOUSNESS and judgment.”—John 16:8.

If it weren’t for the convicting power of the Spirit, we could easily drift along oblivious to the destructive consequences of our behavior. In a world full of dysfunctional individuals it’s sometimes hard to know what “normal” and “healthy” really are. But the

Spirit makes us more deeply aware of the truly “good life” that God designed for His children.

When you hear the dramatic story of a drug addict finding deliverance in Christ, or of someone turning from an immoral lifestyle to God and becoming a faithful spouse and nurturing parent, remember that every step toward wholeness came as a result of the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

3. *Guiding us in our Christian life.* The Holy Spirit sometimes makes His most important moves through quiet whispers:

“Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it.’”—Isaiah 30:21.

God speaks to us directly through the “still small voice” of the Spirit, setting us back on course when we take a detour and fixing our sights on the ultimate goal. Jesus promised His disciples:

“When he, THE SPIRIT of truth, comes, he will GUIDE you into all truth.”—John 16:13.

The Spirit is capable of communicating the most profound secrets of the universe. The same Spirit who guided the disciples guides us “into all truth.” He opens our eyes to the spiritual values we so easily ignore.

Through satellite transmission, our TVs regularly bring images and faces from a continent away into our living room. The Holy Spirit functions a little like God’s satellite, bringing the presence of Christ from heaven to earth, making Him close when we need Him most. That’s why Jesus could promise: I will be “with you and will be in you” (John 14:17).

4. *Aiding our prayer life.* The Holy Spirit also assists in messages sent from earth to heaven:

The Spirit assumed the form of a dove at Christ’s baptism. At Pentecost He appeared as “tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them” (Acts 2:3). On that occasion the Spirit enabled the apostles to communicate the gospel clearly in the languages of people “from many nations” (verses 4-6).

Some Bible students compare the coming of the Spirit to the falling of the early autumn and the late spring rains of Palestine.

“Be glad, O people of Zion, rejoice in the Lord your God, for he has given you the autumn rains in righteousness. He sends you abundant showers, both autumn and spring rains, as before.”—Joel 2:23.

Early autumn in Palestine brings gentle rains which saturate the ground and water the seeds, causing new shoots to sprout from the soil. The Spirit falling at Pentecost was like the early rain of autumn. Pentecost watered the Word sown by Jesus during His ministry and the disciples caused many new buds of faith to spring up as they began to carry the gospel to all the world. This “early rain” of the Spirit provided vital nourishment for the Christian church in its infancy, watering a great many seeds (Joel 2:23, NIV & KJV).

6. THE LATTER RAIN OF THE SPIRIT

Centuries have now passed and the story of salvation has spread over a large part of the earth. It’s now time for the “spring,” or “latter rains,” to ripen the grain, making it ready to harvest.

Bible prophecy tells of a day coming when the Spirit of God will be poured out like a shower on the



Spirit
(Galatians
5:22).

Our concern should be to seek the fruit of the Spirit and then let the Spirit distribute His gifts to us as “he determines” (1 Corinthians 12:11). The church will never be complete without the gifts of the Spirit, but neither will it be strengthened by artificial imitations of what the Spirit produces. God knows when and where to provide the gifts that will best bless His people and His church.

“Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”—Ephesians 4:13.

5. THE FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT AT PENTECOST

On the Day of Pentecost, the Spirit was poured out in unlimited measure, fulfilling Jesus’ earlier promise:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth.”—Acts 1:8.

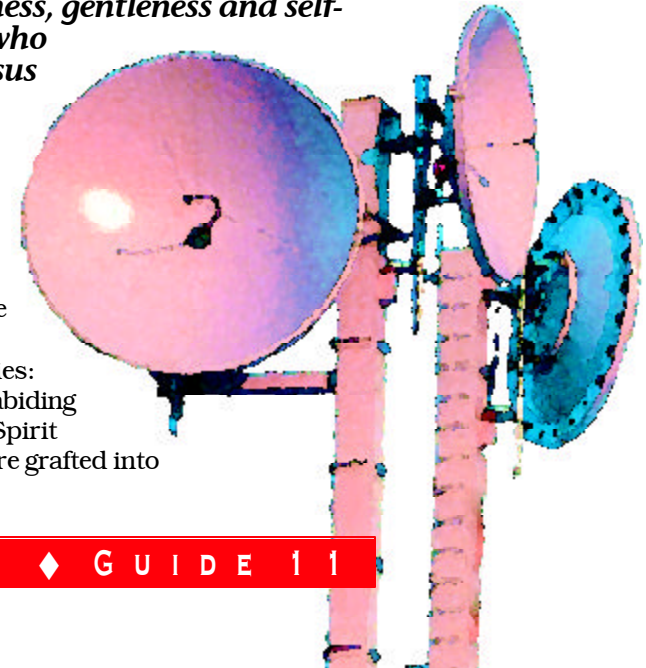
“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, BUT THE SPIRIT HIMSELF INTERCEDES FOR US with groans that words cannot express . . . in accordance with God’s will.”—Romans 8:26, 27.

The Spirit Himself is praying as we pray! When we are struggling to find the words, He is pleading eloquently. When we are so discouraged we can only groan toward God, the Spirit amplifies our faint cry for help into a powerful prayer for intercession before the very throne of God.

5. Developing Christian qualities and character. The Spirit makes spiritually barren individuals as fertile as a tree bearing all kinds of fruit:

“BUT THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. . . . Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature, its passions and desires.”—Galatians 5:22-24.

We can define healthy religion by these fruits. It’s not about rituals; it’s about qualities: genuine love, deep joy, abiding peace. The fruit of the Spirit demonstrates that we are grafted into the true vine, Jesus.



“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”—John 15:5.

Jesus Christ can actually live His abundant life through us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

6. *Preparing us as witnesses.* Jesus promises those who’ve made a commitment to Him as Lord and Saviour:

“YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER when the HOLY SPIRIT comes on you; and you will be MY WITNESSES . . . to the ends of the earth.”—Acts 1:8.

We may not have all the answers; we may not know all the right Bible texts, but the Spirit can give us a story to tell that moves hearts and minds. All who are willing can be made witnesses by the Spirit. The apostles had trouble communicating even with each other before Pentecost. But after the Spirit came they proclaimed Christ with such power that they “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6, KJV).

4. THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

Scripture makes a distinction between God’s gift of the Holy Spirit to every believer for victorious Christian living, and the various gifts of the Spirit provided to believers for effective ministry in different ways.

“When he [Christ] ascended on high, he led captives in his train and GAVE GIFTS to men.’ It was he who gave SOME to be APOSTLES, some to be PROPHETS, some to be EVANGELISTS, and some to be PASTORS

and TEACHERS, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”—Ephesians 4:8, 11-13.

Paul makes clear that all believers do not receive all the gifts. Different Christians receive different gifts, and some may be gifted in more obvious ways than others as the Spirit “gives them to each one, just as he determines” (1 Corinthians 12:11). But the Spirit equips each believer for his or her special role in God’s plan.

Paul’s other list of spiritual gifts is found in 1 Corinthians, chapter 12. This list of gifts includes wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, speaking in different kinds of tongues [margin; languages], and the interpretation of languages (verses 8-10). Some in the Corinthian church were teaching that the gift of tongues or languages was the most important gift of all. Factions sprang up in the church as a result. The apostle devoted chapter 12 to making it clear that the Spirit seeks to bring unity and balance to the church through His gifts and that one manifestation of the Spirit should never exclude or dominate the others.

Which is more important—the gifts of the Spirit, or the fruit of the Spirit? Let Paul answer:

“Eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way.”—1 Corinthians 12:31.

The love chapter (1 Corinthians 13) that follows this verse emphasizes that “the most excellent way” is the way of love. Love is the first fruit of the