



PERSPECTIVE: “A Life in the Spirit”

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This Study Guide provides a summarised study with additional discussion questions based on the scriptures mentioned in the sermon.

Connect & Engage:

“A young missionary, Herbert Jackson, was given a car to help him in his work. The car was a major asset, but it had one difficulty—it would not start without a push or a jump-start. Jackson devised a system to cope with the car’s inability to start. When he was ready to leave his home, he went to a nearby school and asked permission to bring some of the children out of class to help him push-start his car. Throughout the day, he was careful to always park on a hill or to leave his engine running when he stopped for short visits. For two years the young missionary used what he believed was an ingenious method to enable him to use the car.

When poor health forced the Jackson family to leave the field, a new missionary arrived to lead the mission. When Jackson explained to the new missionary his methods for starting the car, the young man opened the hood and began inspecting.

*“Why, Dr Jackson,” he interrupted, “I believe the only trouble is the loose cable.”
He gave the cable a twist, pushed the switch, and the engine roared to life.*

For two years, Dr Jackson had used his own devices and endured needless trouble. The power to start the car was there all the time—it only needed to be connected.”

<https://www.ministry127.com/resources/illustration/the-power-must-be-used>

Framework:

1. This can happen to us too - We can get disconnected from the Power of God in our lives, or at least it can feel that way. God never intended us to live our lives alone. As Christians He intended us to be empowered by His Spirit (this is something for every day). ***In other words, it means living a life which is a Life of the Spirit.***
2. **God wants to re-shape our expectation and experience of what living in the Spirit is all about!**
3. What does a life in the Spirit mean to you?

⇒ **What the Bible says a life in the Spirit means:**

4. LIFE IN THE SPIRIT MEANS BEING A PART OF A NEW COMMUNITY THAT IS DISTINGUISHED BY THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- Read and discuss Acts 1:8
- Luke uses these to illustrate that this new community of believers will:
 - *Have a new social structure under a new covenant
 - *Be gathered from all peoples; young, old, male, female, Jew and non-Jew (even the marginalised)
 - *They will be united by the same Spirit
- The Holy Spirit now becomes the 'marker' which identifies the members of this new Christian community.
- This is shown in 3 Key Events:
 1. **Jerusalem** – Read Pentecost: Acts 2 - Here the Spirit is given, and the Jews in Jerusalem are filled – (Verses 17-18) In Jerusalem the first part of the **all** can be seen to be fulfilled for the Jews. But God's gift is not for the Jews only.
 2. **Samaria** - Mission to Samaritans: Read Acts 8:4-25 (see also Luke 9:51-56) - There was a longstanding rift and animosity between the Jewish and Samaritan communities. The Samaritans shared a similar faith but these were peoples divided by racial, ethnic and religious prejudices. However, Philip (Jew) had gone to preach to the Samaritans about Jesus. They became believers but apparently had not been filled with the Spirit. Peter and John (also Jews) then arrived and laid hands on the new believers and they then received the Spirit. **Why was there this delay?**

It is interesting to cross reference Luke 9:51-56 where we can see John's hatred and prejudice against the Samaritans – It seems that God is deliberately orchestrating a situation where John has to swallow his pride and repent for his attitude, so that by his very hands the Spirit could be imparted to people he had previously considered as outsiders.

The **all** of the prophecy of Joel has now been extended to the Samaritans.

3. **Ends of the earth** - Personified in Cornelius: Read Acts 10 (see also Acts 11 and 15) - Cornelius was an Italian Roman centurion and therefore considered a non-Jew or gentile.

The **all** of the prophecy of Joel has now been extended to 'the ends of the earth.' As represented by Cornelius.

The **all** are **all** linked by the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

- Who might you be prejudice against and think may not deserve the Holy Spirit and not to be part of God's all?
- Is there a person or group of people that you may feel this way towards and need to ask repentance?

5. LIFE IN THE SPIRIT MEANS BEING FILLED AND CONTINUING TO BE FILLED

- Read and discuss Ephesians 5:18
- Paul uses the word **“filled”** in the present tense, why does he do this?
- Being filled with the Spirit is not a one-off event. We need to be continuously filled as we have the tendency to leak!
- Life is messy and hard. Troubles come and can take us by surprise. It’s much better to be filled with the Spirit before the troubles come, so He can help sustain and empower us, rather than praying for a ‘top up’ in the midst of a disaster!
- Without the experience of the Holy Spirit in our lives we are living in spiritual poverty. We don’t always have the level of expectation for the experience of His power and presence that we should have.
- If the Father is offering His Holy Spirit as a gift – Don’t you want all He has to give?!
- How leaky are you?

6. LIFE IN THE SPIRIT MEANS WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

- Read and discuss Galatians 5:16 (see also verses 17-26)
- Walking in this context means ‘*living day to day*’ particularly regarding ethics, i.e. each day doing what is right in God’s eyes.
- However, it is not walking/living in one’s own strength, it is walking ‘*by means of*’ or ‘*empowered by*’ the **Holy Spirit**.
- How do you walk by the spirit?
- Walking is *active* rather than passive. It is something we are told to do rather than wait to happen.
- Walking in the Spirit doesn’t mean that we figuratively stand still anticipating the Spirit will figuratively animate our legs. It means we consciously choose to act in the right way and trust the Holy Spirit to empower us to do so.
- A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE: At work you may have the choice to lie, which may appear an easy way to avoid a difficult situation. Or, to tell the truth which may result in some level of trouble.
You have to decide what the right choice is...
 - **What does the Bible say?*
 - **What does my conscious say?*
 - * *What harm might a wrong choice bring?*
 - * *What witness do I have from the Holy Spirit?*
- Then when the choice is made you need to actively go ahead praying and believing that the Holy Spirit will be empowering you to do so. This is walking, living, and keeping in step with the Spirit.

“Life in the Spirit is not passive submission to the Spirit to do supernatural work in one’s life; rather it requires conscious effort...’ so that one conforms one’s life to the Spirit...’ walking in obedience to the Spirit’s desire.”

Gordon Fee (God’s Empowering Presence, P. 433)

- How can you submit more to the Holy Spirit and trust in His power to live the way God wants you to live?

7. LIFE IN THE SPIRIT MEANS THERE IS A “DIFFERENCE” TO YOUR LIFE

- Have you got the Spirit in your life?
- Are you filled with the Spirit?
- If yes, what difference has this made? (There should always be a difference)
- What might it look like to be **full** of the Spirit?
- This phrase is not used much in the New Testament, however it is used to describe Steven and Barnabas. These can be considered the first examples of what your life can be like when it's full of the Spirit:

Stephen

- Stephen was described as full of faith and Holy Spirit (Acts 6:5, 8-9; grace and power)
- He ministered with signs and wonders (grace/power Acts 6:8-9)
- He showed wisdom (Acts 6:10)
- He exhibited faithfulness, courage and willingness to forgive even his enemies (Acts 7:54-60)

Barnabas

- Barnabas (son of encouragement) was described as full of Holy Spirit and faith (Acts 11:24)
- He was generous selling property to obtain money to give to those in need (Acts 4:32-37)
- He was discerning and encouraging. He accepted Paul (formally Saul and a murderer of Christians before his conversion) as a fellow believer and introduced him to the apostles and community that mistrusted him (Acts 9:27)
- He encouraged and mediated between churches in Jerusalem and Antioch regarding the conversion of Gentiles (Acts 11:22 and 30)
- He was principled, perceptive, and kind. He was willing to suffer a 'sharp disagreement' and rejection by giving John Mark (a failure) a second chance (Acts 15:36-39). It appears his decision is vindicated by Timothy's request (see 2 Tim 4:11)
- If you are a Christian, how has the presence of Holy Spirit caused a difference in your life?

Prayer:

“Father God forgive me for my lack of expectation and subsequent lack of experience of your Holy Spirit. Please fill me afresh – I want to live every day a life of the Spirit. In Jesus Name Amen.”

Going Deeper

Reading Material

As well as the Bible itself the following may be helpful:

Read *“God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul”* by Gordon Fee

Read *“A Biblical Theology of the Holy Spirit”* by Trevor J. Burke & Keith Warrington

Personal Spiritual Response

How is God speaking into your life right now? What decisions need to be made?

Have you made a personal commitment to fully trust in Jesus? Have you been baptised? If not, there is information at bcc.church/baptism to learn more.

Why not contact the Pastoral team to consider whether baptism, an Alpha Course or joining a Life Group could be a next step for you? Contact info@bcc.church for more information.

Serving Opportunity

BCC’s directory of service opportunities <https://bcc.church/ministries> may help you find an opportunity to grow spiritually, whilst helping others.

