

# DISCOVER

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

11

## God's Power in My Life



**WHEN JUSTIN LEFT WORK** for the day, he ran his car through a nearby car wash. He had worked hard to pay for his car, and Justin liked to keep it looking clean. He always wiped it down with a soft cloth after the wash. While he was doing this, he noticed—out of the corner of his eye—a dirty, ragged-looking man making his way toward him across the parking lot. “I hope he isn’t going to ask me for money,” Justin thought. He kept wiping his car and tried to avoid looking at the homeless man.

The man didn’t ask Justin for money, but he did sit down on the curb not far away and watched as Justin worked on his car. After a while, the man said, “That’s a really nice car.” The man’s clothes were rags, but Justin sensed an air of dignity.

“Thanks,” Justin replied.

The expected plea for money never came. As the silence between the two men lengthened, a little voice inside Justin kept whispering, “Ask him if he needs any help.” Justin resisted, feeling sure this would prompt the man to ask for a handout, but the inner voice continued to insist.

Finally, Justin said, “Do you need any help?”

The man answered in three short words. “Don’t we all?”

Profound words from an unexpected source. Those three simple words ring true for all of us. No matter how much we have, no matter how much we may have accomplished, we all need help. Life isn't easy. Being the person we know we should be isn't easy. We all need help.

God has promised a special Source of help and guidance through the confusing, difficult issues we all face in life. God wants to fill your life with the Holy Spirit to guide you into a full, rich spiritual experience. Does life rush past at such a frantic pace that you often find yourself just coping instead of going somewhere? You'll find the help you need if you let the Holy Spirit guide you.

## 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:

**“Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. . . . When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth. . . . He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you” (John 16:7, 13, 14).**

In the divine plan, Jesus needed to return to heaven as our Representative before God's throne and “appear in the presence of God for us” (Hebrews 9:24). However, believers can, in a sense, have the best of both worlds. 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. However, the Holy Spirit

has no such limitations. He can serve as a personal Guide in life 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. However, the Holy Spirit is harder to relate to and picture. We have no easy human comparisons. Nevertheless, the Bible 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 therefore and make disciples of all the 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).

### **A CREATOR**

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

**“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).**

# 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. Talking with Nicodemus, Jesus emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit in changing the human heart:

“Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God’” (John 3:5).

The Spirit of God once moved on the waters at creation; He now moves within us to re-create our lives. To be “born of . . . the Spirit” means that the Spirit gives us an entirely new beginning. It’s more than just a matter of modifying our behavior; 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.** Who enables us to acknowledge our sins and take responsibility for them?

“When He [the Holy Spirit] has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of 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 sinful behavior. The Spirit makes us more deeply aware of the truly good life that God has designed for His children. When a sinner turns to God, every step toward wholeness comes as a result of the influence of the Holy Spirit.

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

“Your ears shall hear a word 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 (1 Kings 19:12), setting us back on course when we take a detour and fixing our eyes again on the ultimate goal. Jesus promised His disciples:

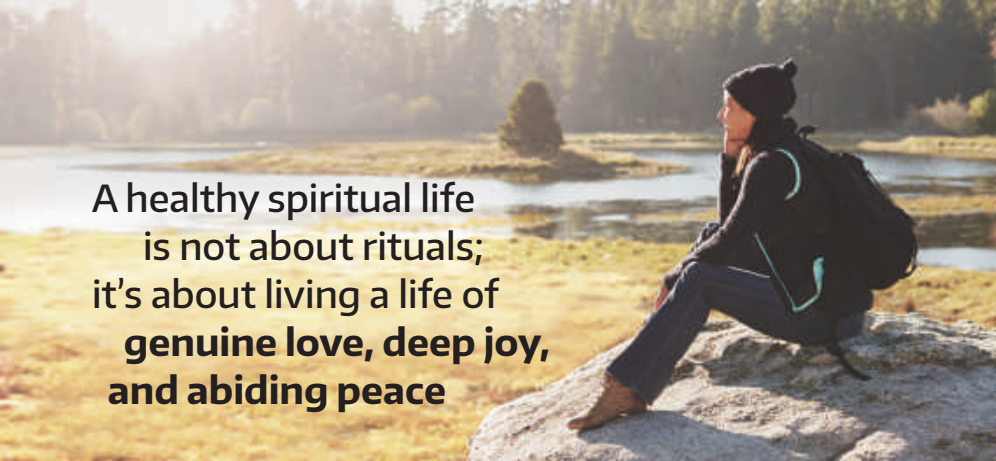
“When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13).

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

Today, technology connects us with the entire world from our computers, televisions, phones and tablets—it’s all at your fingertips from just about anywhere. And this, perhaps, makes it a little easier to understand how the Holy Spirit can bring the heavenly presence of Jesus directly into our lives. He’s always close when we need Him most. Jesus promised, “He [the Holy Spirit] dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:17, 18).

**4. Aiding our prayer life.** The Holy Spirit also assists with the messages we send from earth to heaven:

“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. . . . according to the will of God” (Romans 8:26, 27).



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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 that 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 can make your spiritually-barren life flourish like a fruitful tree:

**“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. . . . And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:22-24).**

These fruits define a healthy spiritual life. It’s not about rituals; it’s about living a life of genuine love, deep joy, and 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. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without 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 made this promise to those who have made a commitment to Him as Lord and Savior:

“You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me . . . to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

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

## 4 | The Gifts of the Spirit

Scripture makes a distinction between the *fruit* of the Holy Spirit given to every believer for victorious Christian living and the various *gifts* of the Spirit provided to individual believers for effective ministry.

“When He [Christ] ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.’ . . . He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:8, 11-13).

Paul clearly states 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 distributes “to each



one individually as He wills” (1 Corinthians 12:11); but the Spirit equips each believer for his or her special role in God’s plans.

Paul’s other list of spiritual gifts is found in 1 Corinthians 12. This list of gifts includes wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, speaking in different languages, and the interpretation of languages (1 Corinthians 12:8-10). 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:

**“But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way” (1 Corinthians 12:31).**

He goes on in 1 Corinthians 13 (the “Love Chapter”) to emphasize that the “more excellent way” is the way of love. Love is the first fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). Our first concern should be to receive the *fruit* of the Spirit—especially love—and then let the Spirit distribute His *gifts* to us as “He wills” (1 Corinthians 12:11). God knows when and where to provide the gifts that will best bless His people and His church (Ephesians 4:11-15).

## 5 | The Early and the Latter Rain of the Holy Spirit

In Palestine, where Jesus lived, there were two seasons of the year in which the rain fell abundantly. The early rains came in the latter part of October and early November (the Hebrew month of Heshwan). The second downpour came in the spring, during the latter part of March and the first part of April (the Hebrew month

of Nisan). The October/November rains were called the early rain, and the March/April rains were called the latter rain.

Early rain in autumn brought gentle showers that saturated the ground and watered the seeds, causing new shoots to sprout and grow from the soil. The latter rain caused the plants to ripen and prepared them for harvest.

In the Bible, water (both the early and the latter rain) is used as a symbol of the coming of the Holy Spirit. The early rain represents one receiving the Holy Spirit into his or her life and growing in the Christian life. The latter rain of the Holy Spirit represents the completion of the work of God's life-changing power in a Christian's life.



**“Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God; for He has given you the former rain faithfully, and He will cause the rain to come down for you—the former rain, and the latter rain” (Joel 2:23).**

## **The Early Rain of the Spirit**

The Spirit falling at Pentecost was like the early rain of autumn. Pentecost watered the words 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.

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

**“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me . . . to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).**

The Spirit assumed the form of a dove at Christ's baptism. At Pentecost, He appeared as "divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them" (Acts 2:3). On that occasion, the Spirit enabled the apostles to communicate the gospel clearly in many different languages (Acts 2:4-6).

## 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 rain"—to ripen the grain, making it ready for harvest.

Bible prophecy tells of a day coming when the Spirit of God will be poured out upon the church:

**"And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on My messengers and on My maidservants 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 prepares every sincere believer for heaven through a great outpouring of His Spirit. Are you 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?

## 6 | Conditions for Receiving the Holy Spirit

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit moved those who heard the gospel appeal to cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

**“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. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call’” (Acts 2:38, 39).**

Repentance—turning away from a sinful way of life and turning to Christ—is a condition for receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit, we must first repent and commit our lives to Christ, which is symbolized by our baptism (Romans 2:4; Acts 3:19).

Jesus stated this same truth in a slightly different way. He emphasized that a willingness to obey God is a condition for receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

**“If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide 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.

## **7** | **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 that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).**

Before leaving the world, Jesus instructed His followers:

**“And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’” (Acts 1:4, 5).**

The word *baptize* means “to immerse.” Christians are to confess their faith in Christ by being immersed in—placed completely beneath—the waters of baptism. They are also to be immersed, or baptized, in the Holy Spirit.

Jesus informed Nicodemus:

**“Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).**

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

**“Grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. . . . Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory” (Ephesians 3:16, 17, 20, 21).**

The Spirit-filled life is the way to genuine freedom. With the Holy Spirit guiding us, we can do immeasurably more than we could before. We discover new desires and 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, and we'll explore these in more detail in Guides 14 and 15. Prayer keeps us in close contact with Christ, and the Word of God keeps us focused on His resources for a Spirit-filled life. This is how we begin to replace bad habits and attitudes with the healthy qualities represented by the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23).

The Spirit-filled life is a gift for every believer. We can all have a successful Christian life as we follow God's leading and continue to move forward. Romans 8 gives an exciting description of the Spirit-filled life. Read it when you can and note how many times Paul points to the "Spirit" as the power behind the Christian life.

Bill's life had been going downhill for some time. Over the course of three years, he had lost his job, family, and home due to an alcohol problem. Now he was living in a shelter and drinking away most of the money he'd picked up from odd jobs.

One snowy evening, just before Christmas, Bill stumbled from his favorite bar. On the sidewalk was a small group singing carols.

Bill stopped and listened. Then a lady left the group and approached Bill. "God bless you, Sir!" she said. "God loves you very much."

Bill just looked at her and then made his way unsteadily down the street. But those words kept ringing in his mind—*God loves you very much*. Over the next few weeks, the more Bill tried to put those words out of his mind, the more they refused to leave.

He continued drinking, but it wasn't the same. Now he felt guilty. Even in the bar, he heard those words—*God loves you very much*.

*Continued on page 16*



# WordSearch

If you want to go deeper into this study topic, complete this section.

1. In order to live a successful Christian life, how essential is it for you to be led by the Holy Spirit? (John 3:5; Romans 8:8, 9, 14)

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2. What promise does God make regarding the Holy Spirit in the days just before Jesus returns to this earth? (Joel 2:28-31)

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3. What role did the Holy Spirit play in the formation of the Bible? (2 Peter 1:19-21)

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4. How involved is the Holy Spirit willing to be in your everyday life? (Luke 12:11, 12)

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5. How eager is God to fill your life with the Holy Spirit? (Luke 11:9-13)

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Finally, Bill couldn't stand it any longer. He went to a church and asked the pastor, "What is going on? I've never felt like this before."

"The Holy Spirit is speaking to your heart," the pastor told Bill. "He is drawing you to God. It's true, you know. God does love you very much."

That was the beginning of a new life for Bill. And the Spirit-filled life can be your life as well. Each day, through prayer and Bible study, the Spirit will help you grow to be more like Jesus.

Have you made the wonderful discovery of the Spirit-filled life? Are you experiencing His life-giving power? Why don't you invite Him into your life right now?

## My Decision

- I want to invite the presence of Jesus into my life through the Holy Spirit and let Him guide me every day.

## My Prayer

*Dear Father, I praise You today for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. I ask Jesus to come and live in me through the Holy Spirit. Drive out my old habits and guide me with Your wisdom and power. Make my life a Spirit-empowered life. I ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.*



**The Incredible Journey**

[www.tij.tv](http://www.tij.tv)

### Australia

PO Box 5101, Dora Creek, NSW 2265  
info@tij.tv | 0481 315 101

### New Zealand

PO Box 76673, Manukau, Auckland 2241  
infonz@tij.tv | 020 422 2042

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