

**B I B L E   K E Y S**

The Church and the  
**Holy Spirit**

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Lessons 20 to 22



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## **THE CHURCH AND THE HOLY SPIRIT**

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# Welcome to *The Church and the Holy Spirit*

**This is the fifth book in the BibleKeys series. God works through his church!**

In the previous book you learned about the task we've all been given as followers of Jesus. It's important to know that you are not alone! You are part of his church, his body, through which Jesus continues to work on the earth. He does this by his Holy Spirit, who helps us and equips us for everything we need to do. In this book we look at what the church actually is, the gifts it has been given by the Holy Spirit and how God continues to speak to his church – and to you personally – today.

**As you go through this course:**

- Always find and mark the verses in your Bible.
- Have a notebook to write your observations, questions and answers.
- Learn some verses by heart, starting with those at the end of each lesson.
- Practice what you have learned. It is through hearing the Word and doing what it says that you will be blessed!

## The sections and their symbols



### **Bible Teaching**

This is the symbol for “Bible Teaching” – the section at the beginning of each lesson. It teaches the subject we are studying.

# The Church and the Holy Spirit • Introduction



## **Bible Quest: Self-study**

In this section there are things for you to do. These help you to know what the Bible says, so you can apply it to your life.



## **Action Time: Act on the Word!**

Faith without action is dead. Therefore, we encourage you to always DO something after each lesson. When you act on what you have learned, God's blessings become real to you.



## **Memo Time: Memorise Bible verses**

In each lesson, we have chosen one or two important Bible verses for you to memorise. The best way is to read them aloud until you know them by heart. Meditate on them regularly and let them become part of your life.



## **Praise Time**

Here we encourage you to praise and worship God. Tell God how wonderful he is, or sing praises to his name!

# The Church and the Holy Spirit • Abbreviations

## Bible abbreviations

|                       |                |                       |             |                        |                |
|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-------------|------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Old Testament:</b> |                | <i>Isaiah</i>         | <i>Isa</i>  | <i>Acts</i>            | <i>Acts</i>    |
| <i>Genesis</i>        | <i>Gen</i>     | <i>Jeremiah</i>       | <i>Jer</i>  | <i>Romans</i>          | <i>Rom</i>     |
| <i>Exodus</i>         | <i>Ex</i>      | <i>Lamentations</i>   | <i>Lam</i>  | <i>1 Corinthians</i>   | <i>1 Cor</i>   |
| <i>Leviticus</i>      | <i>Lev</i>     | <i>Ezekiel</i>        | <i>Ezek</i> | <i>2 Corinthians</i>   | <i>2 Cor</i>   |
| <i>Numbers</i>        | <i>Num</i>     | <i>Daniel</i>         | <i>Dan</i>  | <i>Galatians</i>       | <i>Gal</i>     |
| <i>Deuteronomy</i>    | <i>Deut</i>    | <i>Hosea</i>          | <i>Hos</i>  | <i>Ephesians</i>       | <i>Eph</i>     |
| <i>Joshua</i>         | <i>Josh</i>    | <i>Joel</i>           | <i>Joel</i> | <i>Philippians</i>     | <i>Phil</i>    |
| <i>Judges</i>         | <i>Judg</i>    | <i>Amos</i>           | <i>Amos</i> | <i>Colossians</i>      | <i>Col</i>     |
| <i>Ruth</i>           | <i>Ruth</i>    | <i>Obadiah</i>        | <i>Obad</i> | <i>1 Thessalonians</i> | <i>1 Thess</i> |
| <i>1 Samuel</i>       | <i>1 Sam</i>   | <i>Jonah</i>          | <i>Jon</i>  | <i>2 Thessalonians</i> | <i>2 Thess</i> |
| <i>2 Samuel</i>       | <i>2 Sam</i>   | <i>Micah</i>          | <i>Mic</i>  | <i>1 Timothy</i>       | <i>1 Tim</i>   |
| <i>1 Kings</i>        | <i>1 Kings</i> | <i>Nahum</i>          | <i>Nah</i>  | <i>2 Timothy</i>       | <i>2 Tim</i>   |
| <i>2 Kings</i>        | <i>2 Kings</i> | <i>Habakkuk</i>       | <i>Hab</i>  | <i>Titus</i>           | <i>Titus</i>   |
| <i>1 Chronicles</i>   | <i>1 Chron</i> | <i>Zephaniah</i>      | <i>Zeph</i> | <i>Philemon</i>        | <i>Phlm</i>    |
| <i>2 Chronicles</i>   | <i>2 Chron</i> | <i>Haggai</i>         | <i>Hag</i>  | <i>Hebrews</i>         | <i>Heb</i>     |
| <i>Ezra</i>           | <i>Ezra</i>    | <i>Zechariah</i>      | <i>Zech</i> | <i>James</i>           | <i>James</i>   |
| <i>Nehemiah</i>       | <i>Neh</i>     | <i>Malachi</i>        | <i>Mal</i>  | <i>1 Peter</i>         | <i>1 Pet</i>   |
| <i>Esther</i>         | <i>Esth</i>    |                       |             | <i>2 Peter</i>         | <i>2 Pet</i>   |
| <i>Job</i>            | <i>Job</i>     | <b>New Testament:</b> |             | <i>1 John</i>          | <i>1 John</i>  |
| <i>Psalms</i>         | <i>Ps</i>      | <i>Matthew</i>        | <i>Matt</i> | <i>2 John</i>          | <i>2 John</i>  |
| <i>Proverbs</i>       | <i>Prov</i>    | <i>Mark</i>           | <i>Mark</i> | <i>3 John</i>          | <i>3 John</i>  |
| <i>Ecclesiastes</i>   | <i>Eccl</i>    | <i>Luke</i>           | <i>Luke</i> | <i>Jude</i>            | <i>Jude</i>    |
| <i>Song of Songs</i>  | <i>Songs</i>   | <i>John</i>           | <i>John</i> | <i>Revelation</i>      | <i>Rev</i>     |



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# The Church – The Body of Christ

## About this lesson:

Jesus' promise that he would not leave his disciples but be with them always was made possible through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church. These two events are two sides of the same coin: God became present among us! Through his Holy Spirit, God now dwells in his church – the body of Christ – and is actively at work in and through it.

The topics of this lesson:

- **What is the body of Christ?**
- **Why did Jesus build his church?**
- **Gifts and functions in the church**

Knowing that his time on earth was coming to an end, Jesus started preparing his disciples for what lay ahead. He had a plan for how he would continue his work here: "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Something was coming that would be greater and stronger than all the powers of darkness: the church of Jesus Christ! The church would be the body through which Jesus would continue his ministry on earth, fulfilling God's marvellous distribution plan by the power of the Holy Spirit.

*Matt 16:18*

*John 16:7*

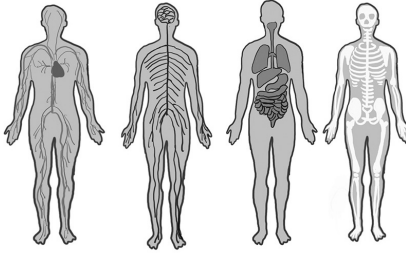
*Acts 1:8*



## 1 What is the body of Christ?

The church of Jesus Christ has many names. The English word "church", for example, stems from a Greek word that means "that which belongs to the Lord". Another Greek word, *ekklesia*, means "those who are called together". But Paul really sheds light on what the church is when he describes it as a *body*.

# The Church and the Holy Spirit



Consider the human body and all its parts: the head and feet, arms, eyes and ears; the blood system and nerves; lungs so you can breathe, a heart that pumps your blood, a backbone so you can stand up and move around. Most of

these important organs we never see, but without them we wouldn't be alive. The body is amazing!

Eph 1:22,23

The Bible says that the church is the body of Christ: **“And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”** The church is not just like his body – it is his body. So even though Jesus is not here on earth, his body is. And Jesus is the head! What does this mean? It means that Jesus Christ is at work on the earth every day, through the members of his body.

## Who is a member of the body of Christ?

Matt 28:19,20

Jesus gave this command to his disciples: **“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”** **Everyone who believes in Jesus and is baptised – faith and baptism go hand in hand – is a member of the body of Christ.** This is true whether we live in India, China, USA, Sweden or Brazil. Praise God, we have brothers and sisters everywhere!



## Different – and united!

1 Cor 12:27 NIV

Listen to this: **“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”** We are parts of his body! That's how closely connected we are to Jesus! It also means that **we are**

# The Church – The Body of Christ

**united in him.** Just as with the human body, where the organs must function in harmony for the blood to flow and nerve signals to be transmitted, so it is with us, the body of Christ. We are mutually dependent on each other.

We're united, though very different. Paul gives a wonderful and quite funny illustration of the body of Christ:

1 Cor 12:12-21

"For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.... For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? ***But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'***"

Each member needs the other members of the body: eyes to see, feet to walk, hands to help. Each one is different, thank God for that! How would a body look with only eyes, feet or toes? How could the mouth speak without lungs and a tongue? God has designed the body of Christ so that we all need each other. We are to serve and help one another. Only together can we do the things God has planned for us to do.



# The Church and the Holy Spirit

## United in faith

Eph 4:4-6

At the heart of the body of Christ is faith. Paul writes, "There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call – **one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.**" The body is one and the Spirit is one, and they have been united since the birth of the church. The body of Christ is also united by one faith: faith in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the faith that Jesus taught his disciples, which they in turn were to teach all nations.

Matt 28:19,20

Acts 2:42

The first church devoted themselves to four things: the apostles' teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayers. Let's look more closely at what this meant:

Titus 2:1

- The **apostles' teaching** (Greek: *didache*) is first and foremost the Bible and what Paul calls "sound doctrine". This was later summarised in the first Christian creeds, the earliest being the Apostles' Creed (see last page in this lesson). The Bible is common to all Christians and is the authority for what we believe, guarding against wrong doctrine.

Acts 2:44

- The **fellowship** (Greek: *koinonia*) means a close and strong fellowship, in which we share each other's lives. "And all who believed were together and had all things in common." That's close fellowship indeed! How far do we want to go in fellowship with our brothers and sisters?

Matt 26:26-28

1 Cor 10:16,17

1 Cor 11:23-26

- The **breaking of bread**, the Lord's Supper, is where we have communion with Jesus and each other by sharing the bread and wine. Holy Communion is at the heart of Christian worship and has many wonderful promises attached to it.

Acts 2:46

- The early church met in the temple every day for **prayers**. We pray because prayer is how we connect and communicate with God.

Jude 20,21

These four things were an integral part of day-to-day life in the early church. Unity of faith was at the heart of it all. As the body of Christ, we have one common faith. "But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life."



## 2 Why did Jesus build his church?

John 14:12

Jesus built his church so that he could continue doing his work on earth. Wherever he went, Jesus preached the gospel and healed the sick. The apostles did this too. And the church, the body of Christ, is called to do the same! In fact, Jesus said that his church would do even greater things: “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.”

Acts 5:15

Can we really do even greater things than Jesus did? Yes! The book of Acts shows us it’s possible. Consider, for example, the account of how people were healed simply through Peter’s shadow falling on them as he passed by.

Jesus built his church to fulfil God’s marvellous distribution plan. Through the church, Jesus can be present anytime and anywhere on this earth.

### A temple where the Spirit dwells

Eph 2:19-22

The body of Christ is not a mere human association – it is supernatural! “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into **a holy temple in the Lord**. In him you also are being built together into **a dwelling place for God in the Spirit**.”

Eph 5:18b-21

The Spirit lived in Jesus when he walked on earth. But now the Spirit dwells in his body, the church. As the Scripture says, we “are being built together into a dwelling place for God in the Spirit”. So every time we gather together, we can meet God! Do you wish to see more of the Holy Spirit in your own church or fellowship gatherings? Let’s read what Paul says a little further on: “**Be filled with the Spirit**, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.” We can be as filled as we want to be, simply by yielding to the Holy Spirit as we praise and thank God and serve one another in love. The temple is already here – so let’s fill it with the Holy Spirit!

1 Cor 3:16



Rom 12:4-6

## 3 Gifts and functions in the church

We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other: “For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so **we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them.**” Just as an eye and a foot have different functions, each one of us has unique roles and gifts within the body of Christ.

- **Natural gifts.** These gifts can be musical, financial or administrative, social, technical or artistic, practical or intellectual. Someone may have a special gift of caring for others, and someone else a gift to lead or teach. *All* the gifts that God has invested in his creation are also gifts to the church. *All* can be used under the leadership and anointing of the Holy Spirit. We see an example of this when the tabernacle was built: “Bezalel and Oholiab and every craftsman in whom the Lord has put skill and intelligence to know how to do any work in the construction of the sanctuary shall work in accordance with all that the Lord has commanded.” Natural gifts were also valued in the organisation of the early church: “Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.”

Exod 36:1

Acts 6:3

- **Supernatural gifts.** These gifts are independent of a person’s skills or training. We’ll study gifts of the Spirit, supernatural gifts, in the next lesson.

1 Cor 12:4-7,11

Both natural and supernatural gifts are at work as the members of the body serve one another: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.... All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.”

Only together can the members of the church fulfil God’s calling. You are important! You are a gift, and you have important gifts that other members of the body of Christ need. The body grows when each of us contributes: “**From him the whole body, joined and held together by every**

Eph 4:16 NIV

*supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*” This is God’s dream! This is how God is going to reach every man, woman, boy and girl with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## The ministry gifts and the church

*Eph 4:11*

Jesus also gave other gifts to the church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers. These are leaders, who are called to equip you and me so that we can be fruitful members of the body of Christ. We need them all, and the Lord uses each one to speak into our lives in powerful ways.

*1 Cor 3:10*

*Eph 2:20*

- **Apostles** often pioneer new mission fields and Christian work. Like skilled master builders, they lay a foundation that the body of Christ can continue building on. They are not the same as the twelve apostles, on whom the whole body of Christ is built forever.

- **Prophets** have the gift of seeing and hearing what God is saying. They are able to foresee what will happen, and they give vision and direction, as well as encouragement and correction, to the body of Christ.

*Mark 1:15*

*2 Tim 4:5*

- **Evangelists** have a special calling to preach the gospel and win people for the Lord. A true evangelist preaches both repentance and faith, and points to Jesus as Saviour. However, every pastor and leader is called to spread the good news – us too!

*1 Pet 5:2-4*

- **Pastors** are shepherds, sharing the work of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus, in caring for the local church. When Paul left Ephesus after years of ministry, he told the pastors there, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.” Without pastors, the church would not function at all, so pray for pastors, that they’ll be protected and blessed, and more will be raised up.

*Acts 20:28*

- **Teachers** are Spirit-equipped leaders with an ability to open up the Word of God to the church, to lay a solid biblical foundation in people’s lives and to teach them to observe everything that Jesus commanded. Sound teaching is essential in the body of Christ. Not all teachers are ministry gifts, however – this is a supernatural anointing, just as a prophet or apostle is anointed for their special role.

*Matt 28:20*

# The Church and the Holy Spirit

## The body of Christ – a lifetime of discovery

This teaching is only the beginning! Discovering the richness in the body of Christ is a lifetime endeavour. May the Lord bless you as a fruitful member of his body!

### ***Bible Quest***



**Exercise 1: Describe the connection between the body of Christ and the Holy Spirit.**

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**Exercise 2: This lesson mentions three kinds of gifts. Describe them, using Bible verses to explain.**

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**Exercise 3: Read about the various gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:28, Romans 12:6–8 and Ephesians 4:11. List them and try to describe them.**

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## ***Praise Time***

Praise God for the wonderful body of Christ!  
Praise God for your brothers and sisters in the church!  
Praise God for his special plans for you!



## ***Action Time***

### **✓ Discover the gifts of others**

Think about some of your friends at the church or Christian fellowship you're a part of:

1. What natural gifts do you see in them that they could use in the body of Christ?
2. What spiritual gifts do you see in them that they could use in the body of Christ?

### **✓ Discover your own gifts**

1. What natural gifts do you have that you can use in the body of Christ?
2. What spiritual gifts do you have that you can use in the body of Christ?

### **✓ Get activated**

Offer to help in your church – and be willing to do whatever is needed. As you do this, God will lead you into your own special area of service.



## Memo Time

### Memorise and Speak God's Word

**“Now you are the body of Christ  
and individually members of it.”**

*1 Cor 12:27*

### The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church\*,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.  
Amen.

*\* meaning the universal Christian church – all believers in Jesus Christ*

# The Gifts of the Spirit – Tools of God’s love

## About this lesson:

The world is crying out for a miracle! People are desperate for healing, guidance, a way out of hopeless circumstances. Jesus dealt with needs like these every day, but how can people be helped now that he is no longer here? The answer is found in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These have been given to the body of Christ so that we can represent Jesus in our world and do what he did.

The topics of this lesson:

- What is a gift of the Spirit?
- The nine gifts of the Spirit
- How to grow in the gifts
- The gifts and love

Jesus always had an answer to people’s problems. The anointing of the Holy Spirit was on him to meet their needs. At his baptism “the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove”, and he was “full of the Holy Spirit” and “led by the Spirit”. As the body of Christ today, the same goes for us! The Holy Spirit is on us and in us, and we can be led by the Spirit and use the gifts that he has given to us – if we want to! Paul writes, “Earnestly desire the spiritual gifts.” Here’s why:

### 1. The gifts of the Spirit were part of Jesus’ ministry.

He was known for them, and the body of Christ should be too. Healing, prophecy, discernment of spirits, words of wisdom and knowledge, miracles, faith – all these were practiced by Jesus and the apostles.

*Luke 3:22*

*Luke 4:1*

*1 Cor 14:1*

# The Church and the Holy Spirit

**2. The gifts are needed to help people.** The world is full of needs – everything from wisdom to a miracle. We cannot meet these needs without the resources God has given us. One gift alone cannot meet every need, so all the gifts have a role to play! And praise God, all the gifts have been made available to us. They are not limited to a handful of preachers or celebrities. No, anyone who believes can use the gifts and do mighty things by faith.

Mark 16:17,18

**3. The gifts release the presence of the Holy Spirit.** They are signs to both believers and unbelievers that God is really among us.

1 Cor 14:22-25



## 1 What is a gift of the Spirit?

A gift of the Spirit is a tool of God's love. As we practice the gifts, it's important to remember that the goal is always to show people the love of God. Since people have many needs, we need many tools – just as a carpenter needs different tools for different purposes. A hammer is no good for drilling holes, and a saw can't tighten a screw!



1 Cor 12:11



The gifts are distributed to us as the Holy Spirit wills. They are not given to us as medals, nor for us to proudly boast, "Look who I healed!" You didn't heal anyone! It is not by human strength, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. Always give all the glory to God!

Human wisdom, knowledge, medicine are all important and valuable, but **the gifts of the Spirit begin where human ability ends.** The gifts are manifestations of the Spirit. They are not something we can achieve on our own.

1 Cor 12:7

We can't just think, "Now I want to prophesy" or "Now I want to do a miracle" and then do it. Only the Spirit knows what is exactly right in every situation. Sometimes we only realise afterwards that he let us use a gift!

Does this mean you should just sit around and wait for the gifts? No, you should eagerly pray for them, expect them to be available and boldly use them whenever you sense the Holy Spirit urging you to do so. Peter describes how the prophets were “carried along” or “moved” by the Holy Spirit. We call this moving by the Holy Spirit “the anointing”. ***“The anointing that you received from him abides in you... his anointing teaches you about everything.”*** Jesus was anointed for his ministry, and so is his body, which you are part of. Praise God, we can all do the works of Jesus! The anointing abides in you – it is within you – and it moves you to speak prophetically, to give a word of knowledge or to act in faith. As you begin to move in the gifts, your sensitivity to them and your faith to use them will grow, and you will utilise them more and more.

2 Pet 1:21

1 John 2:27

Luke 4:18

Now let’s study the gifts.



## 2 The nine gifts of the Spirit

Mark 6:13;

16:17,18

Jude 20

Gal 5:6

1 Cor 13:2

Gal 5:22,23

The gifts are mentioned in several places in the Bible, but the most comprehensive teaching on spiritual gifts is in 1 Corinthians 12–14. These three chapters explain how the gifts work. Why is chapter 13 – about love – set in the middle of it all? Because without love, faith won’t work and the gifts won’t work. Love is the engine that makes us want to help people through the gifts of the Spirit. There’s a **ninefold fruit** of the Spirit (see lesson 9) and there are **nine gifts** of the Spirit – **gifts without love, and love without gifts, will not work.**

1 Cor 12:8-10 NKJV

Paul describes the gifts of the Spirit in this way: ***“To one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.”***

We can view these gifts as belonging to three groups:

- Message gifts: prophecy, gift of tongues, interpretation of tongues
- Power gifts: healings, miracles, gift of faith
- Information gifts: word of knowledge, word of wisdom, discernment of spirits

## Message gifts

*Acts 2:17,18*

These gifts convey messages from the Holy Spirit, and just like all the gifts, they are for all believers. The prophet Joel prophesied long ago that the Spirit would be poured out on all people. Everyone would prophesy: sons, daughters, young, old, male and female servants. Everyone would be able to receive revelation from God. *How* the revelation comes is not the most important thing. It can come through a prophetic word or Bible verse that just seems to “come alive”, or the Holy Spirit may speak to you through a dream or picture. The important thing is that every believer can see, hear and act on what God is saying.

*1 Cor 14:29*

All messages from the Holy Spirit must be tested: “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said.” The weighing or evaluating is done by the church, the believers present. If it’s not received as a word from the Lord, it falls. But if the word is recognised as being from the Holy Spirit, it needs to be listened to and obeyed. You will feel an “ok” in your inner being when it is the Lord who is speaking.

### – Prophecy

*1 Cor 14:39,5a*

To prophesy means “to tell beforehand” and “to speak forth” the words of God. This is the gift that Paul emphasises most. “Earnestly desire to prophesy,” he writes, and “I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy.” Why is prophecy so important? Three things are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 14:3:

*Prov 29:18*

First of all, prophecy builds us up. Prophecy reveals what God wants to do and what he wants us to do, as a church and as individual believers. And prophecy strengthens us for the task. Without prophetic vision, God’s people perish. We become discouraged when we can’t see the way forward. We don’t know what to do, so little gets done!

*Jer 29:13*

Second, prophecy encourages us, and challenges us too. Prophecy usually enables us to see above and beyond what we can see with our natural eyes. It speaks the truth about situations but makes clear what we need to do, often giving a condition, such as “You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.”

*1 Cor 14:3*

Third, prophecy comforts, speaking God’s words of life into our lives.

# The Gifts of the Spirit – Tools of God’s love

## – Tongues

1 Cor 14:14,15 There are two kinds of tongues. There is the personal, supernatural language that we can use when praying, singing and praising God, and there is the gift of tongues that is used to bless others.

1 Cor 14:18 Paul writes that he wants everyone to speak in tongues and that he speaks in tongues more than anyone! The church in Corinth had a problem, however. Everyone was speaking in tongues at the same time, and there was no clear message. Since the *gift* of tongues is a way for the Spirit to speak to the whole church, the message must be clear. Like a solo instrument in an orchestra, the Holy Spirit will suddenly give a message in a distinct tongue. Everyone can hear that it is special, and the speaker often senses it too – wow, God wants to say something! Everyone stops to listen, and then waits for the interpretation. The edification of the church is the main purpose, which is why Paul says, “In church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.”

Acts 2:8 The gift is called “different kinds of tongues” for good reason. People may speak in an existing language, as on the day of Pentecost, or perhaps even in the “tongues of angels”.  
1 Cor 13:1 The same person may even use different tongues on the same occasion, beginning softly with one and moving into another kind of tongue altogether. Like a mighty pipe organ, this gift has many voices, big and small.

Acts 2:4 Sometimes people think you need to wait for tongues to “come over you”, but that’s not what the Bible says. After being filled with the Spirit, the believers “began to speak”. You decide when to start and stop, and if it’s loud or soft.  
1 Cor 14:32 NIV Each of us is free and responsible: “The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets.” (For more on speaking, praying and singing in tongues, see lesson 15.)

## – Interpretation of tongues

1 Cor 14:13 For a message in tongues to be understood by the church, it needs to be interpreted. Paul says, “One who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret.” God will give the interpretation, either to you or to someone else. Occasionally, a message in tongues is followed by silence and waiting before someone finally takes the step of faith to interpret. Or there may be two or three messages in tongues and then an interpretation. A message in tongues followed by

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1 Cor 14:5b

interpretation is as beneficial as a prophecy, because it builds up the church.

## Power gifts

Through the power gifts, God's love steps in to change lives and situations. We can do everything that Jesus did: heal the sick, see miracles happen and take bold steps of faith. God wants us to pursue all the spiritual gifts, so start seeking him today – not just for tongues or prophecy, but also for the power gifts!

### – Gifts of healings

The plural endings are significant. There are several gifts and several healings – perhaps because there are healing gifts for different kinds of issues. Someone may be particularly gifted in inner healing, another in back problems, another in fertility issues, and so on. But generally we are to pray for healing whenever someone needs it, asking God for a gift of healing in each situation. As we learned in lesson 17, there are many ways to healing, including the prayer of faith and anointing with oil. While the prayer of faith often manifests after some time, a gift of healing usually manifests immediately, breaking through all hindrances (see the illustration of the snail and rocket in lesson 6).

From time to time there can be a special anointing for healing in a church service or particular situation, and you just know it. Take hold of it – and bless the person in need!

### – Miracles

What are miracles? Miracles are healings and other mighty acts that demonstrate the love and power of God. Paul writes, "I persevered in demonstrating among you the marks of a true apostle, including signs, wonders and miracles," and we read that "Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people." A miracle goes beyond the miracle itself. It is a sign of the kingdom of God!

Almost all the healings and other mighty acts mentioned in the gospel of John are referred to as "signs". They were signs that Jesus is God. Through miracles God testifies about himself: "God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will."

To see examples of the kinds of miracles God wants to do,

2 Cor 12:12 NIV

Acts 6:8

John 2:11,23;

4:54; 6:2

Heb 2:4

study the Gospels and the book of Acts. You’ll see miracles on page after page. As you read about them, make mental notes to yourself: this is a miracle that God can do today! And here is another miracle that God can do today!

## – Gift of faith

*Rom 12:3*

Faith is the foundation of the Christian life, and every believer has been given a measure of faith. The gift of faith is something else, however, since it is not given to everyone:

*1 Cor 12:8,9 NKJV*

“To one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit....”

So we see that there are different kinds of faith:

*Eph 2:8,9*

- Faith for salvation, which is given to anyone who comes to the Lord. Every believer has this faith in Jesus, who has saved us and blessed us.

- Faith as a spiritual gift, which we can and should seek God for. This is a miraculous faith, given by the Holy Spirit in specific situations.

*Heb 11:1*

Every now and again you just know you’re going to receive a special answer to prayer. Even though all the evidence speaks against it, in your heart you consider it done. This is the kind of faith that assures me I am healed, even if the doctors say my case is hopeless. It is a faith of breakthrough. There’s a feeling of certainty about it – we know we will have what we’ve hoped for. Where previously we’d wondered where the money for a new church building or mission project would come from, now we know we’ll have it when the bills need to be paid. This faith just knows that the outreach campaign will be a success. What a great gift! It is really worth asking God for.

## Information gifts

Three of the spiritual gifts allow us to share some of the information and knowledge that God has. He knows everything, from what’s happening in the spiritual world to the deepest thoughts of every human being. When helping people – and sometimes when we need to stand against the enemy – God may disclose a piece of information, giving us supernatural knowledge and insight. These gifts have nothing to do with human knowledge, human wisdom or our own ability to discern things. Human knowledge is not wrong, of

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course, and we need such knowledge as well. These gifts from God, however, give us information that we would never be able to acquire on our own.

## – *Word of knowledge*

A word of knowledge reveals specific facts and circumstances. In a public gathering, for example, the Holy Spirit may impress on a person that “someone here has pain in their left big toe” or “someone here has terminal cancer and God wants to heal them”. A word of knowledge is very powerful in counselling, as God can reveal the root cause of a particular problem.

Here are some things that a word of knowledge does:

- It tells us that God knows everything.
- It shows us that he knows and cares for each person.
- It is often a sign of God’s miraculous presence.
- It releases miracles – often instantly!

*1 Cor 14:24,25*

There’s no limit to what God can reveal through a word of knowledge – the only limitation is what we believe and expect. Many times we may give words of knowledge without even knowing it, but people recognise that God is speaking into their lives through us. Praise God for this wonderful gift!

## – *Word of wisdom*

A word of wisdom is similar to a word of knowledge. It gives insight into some of God’s wisdom, but is directed more towards the future: if you do this, these will be the consequences. Because God sees the whole picture and knows everything, he can foresee circumstances and developments. He knows what consequences a certain action will bring.

To receive a word of wisdom is to see as God sees. A good Old Testament example is Solomon’s wisdom in settling an argument between two women; a New Testament example is when Paul foresaw what would happen to the shipwrecked sailors.

*1 Kings 3:16-27*

*Acts 27:31-34*

A word of wisdom does the following:

- Gives wisdom that helps in taking the right decision
- Gives supernatural solutions to difficult problems
- Shows the way forward

Just like a word of knowledge, a word of wisdom can speak to people and work in their lives without us being aware of it.

## – *Discernment of spirits*

Discernment in general is crucial for all Christians as we grapple with different issues. Is this idea really from God? Is

this partner the right one for our church or ministry? The Holy Spirit gives wisdom and understanding in all these things, and as our sensitivity to him grows, we will make fewer and fewer mistakes.

Rom 8:16

1 Cor 2:11

The discernment of spirits is something different. As we learned in lesson 18, there’s a visible and an invisible world, and there are also different kinds of spirits. The Spirit of God – the Holy Spirit – came to live in us when we received Jesus as our Saviour, but we have our own human spirit too. And, as we know, both angels and demons are spirits, and they’re at work in our world. The discernment of spirits is mostly used to discern evil spirits. Jesus often encountered such spirits and discerned who they were – before driving them out! And we see that Paul did the same.

Acts 16:16-18

The gift of discernment can help clarify whether a person is plagued by an evil spirit or there’s another cause altogether, such as a mental disorder. Discernment gives us a sense of what is in a person. This does not mean we’ll always know everything about people, but God can share his understanding with us when we need it. Through discernment, he can also let us know when something’s not of his Spirit, and in that way help us avoid wrong choices or relationships. It may just come as an uneasy feeling that all is not as it should be, but if we follow that prompting, we will thank God afterwards. Let’s eagerly ask God for the discernment of spirits, one of the most important gifts!



## 3 How to grow in the gifts

Now we have an overview of the spiritual gifts, the amazing toolbox of the Holy Spirit. But how can we grow in these gifts?

### 1. Be passionate about growing in the gifts

1 Cor 14:1

The Bible tells us, “Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.” If we are not eager, we will not grow. The Greek word for “eagerly desire” is the same as for our word *zealot*, as used for Jesus’ disciple Simon the Zealot, who was part of a fanatical group in Israel. It means “to burn with zeal” or “to boil”. When God hears your passionate, fervent prayers, he will answer them!

### 2. Be eager to minister to others with the gifts

The driving force in using the gifts is the loving heart of God,

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and your love and compassion for people will give you opportunities to pray for them. As you stretch out your hands to pray for those in need, you will start to see the gifts in function.

## 3. Begin to take steps of faith

*Rom 12:6,7*

All gifts work by faith. Paul says each of us will prophesy, serve and teach according to our measure of faith. It takes faith to pray for people or to stand up and say, "Someone here has this problem, and God wants to help you." But when you take a step of faith, God will honour that faith. So be bold and step into an exciting life in which the gifts of the Holy Spirit are at work!

## Q & A

There are many questions about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We will answer a few of them now.

**Q:** How many gifts can I have?

**A:** You can have as many gifts as you need to help people. Everyone will not possess all the gifts, of course. Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 12 that one gift is given to one person and another gift is given to someone else. In saying this, he does not mean that each person can have only one gift – a carpenter with just one tool is very limited! Paul's point is that these gifts come from the Holy Spirit, who distributes them as he wishes. Elsewhere Paul talks about having more than one gift: "Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy.... One who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret." So, eagerly desire to have not just one, but many spiritual gifts in your toolbox!



*1 Cor 14:5,13*

**Q:** How important is speaking in tongues?

**A:** Paul admonishes the Corinthians for their disorderly use of tongues, but he clearly considers it to be important. If he didn't, he wouldn't have said he wanted them all to speak in tongues and that he spoke in tongues more than any of them.

Paul says three other things about the significance of speaking in tongues. When you pray in tongues:

*1 Cor 14:4*

- You build yourself up. Speaking in tongues is always beneficial, because it strengthens your inner man.

*1 Cor 14:2*

- You speak secret things to God in the Spirit.

*1 Cor 14:14*

- Your spirit prays.

# The Gifts of the Spirit – Tools of God’s love

Tongues are valuable indeed, but in church gatherings it’s different since every message intended for the church must be understandable. This is why prophecy and tongues with interpretation are better than tongues alone.

**Q:** I am not a prophet. Can I prophesy anyway?

**A:** God wants everyone to prophesy, and Paul encourages us all to strive for the gift of prophecy especially – so you can and will prophesy! With that said, prophesying now and then doesn’t make you a prophet. The prophet is a powerful ministry gift in the body of Christ, and few are called to this. So not everyone is a prophet, but everyone can prophesy.

**Q:** Can I use the interpretation of tongues aside from church gatherings?

**A:** Yes, you can! During your personal prayer time, you can pray in the Spirit, expecting you’ll be given the interpretation. *1 Cor 14:13-15* “One who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also.” You can switch back and forth between praying in the Spirit and praying with your mind. The prayer with your mind will be energised by the prayer in the Spirit, and through interpreting your prayer, your mind will also understand and benefit from what you are praying.

**Q:** Can I get more words of knowledge and words of wisdom through further education?

**A:** No, these are supernatural gifts. The best education is to get to know what the Bible says, see how the gifts are practiced and start using them! The best and most valuable discernment comes when you are filled with the Word of God, since everything you see in the spirit must always align with the Bible.

**Q:** Won’t the discernment of spirits make me suspicious of everything and everyone?

**A:** No, the discernment of spirits is not a “gift of suspicion”. Be careful not to suspect demons everywhere! Instead, be wise and always seek the Holy Spirit’s confirmation.

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**Q:** Can I perform miracles and heal people?

**A:** Yes and no. In your own power, you can do nothing. In the power of the Holy Spirit, you can do amazing things! God will lead you and use you.



## 4 The gifts and love

The gifts of the Spirit are tools of God's love. The driving force is love! The goal is always to help people, never to become famous. Much of the teaching in this lesson is based on 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. Between these two chapters about the gifts of the Spirit is the chapter on love, chapter 13:

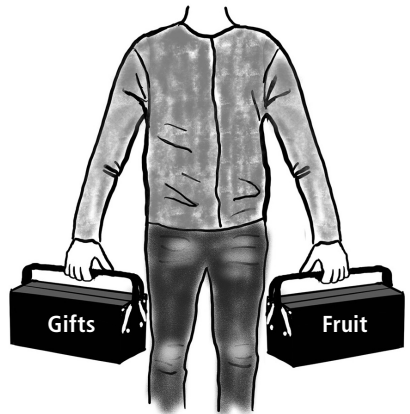
1 Cor 13:1-10

***"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away."***

Gal 5:22,23

God gave us nine gifts of the Holy Spirit and there's a ninefold fruit of the Spirit (see lesson 9). These are two sides of the same coin. **The gifts go hand in hand with love!**

This is why Paul puts his teaching on love right in the middle of his teaching on the gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit. Chapter 12 presents an overview of the gifts and ministries available, while chapter 14 expands on how to use them. Between the two chapters is the reason for the gifts: they are tools of God's love.



## *Bible Quest*



**Exercise 1:** List all the gifts of the Spirit and write a brief description of each.

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**Exercise 2:** Read 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 and list all the other gifts and functions found there.

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**Exercise 3:** What is the connection between love and the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

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## Action Time

Now it's time to put into practice what you have learned!

### 1. Build yourself up

1 Cor 14:4,18

This is the key to flowing more in the Holy Spirit. Paul says, "The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself" and "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you." Do what Paul did: strengthen yourself by speaking in tongues. As you are strengthened, you will grow more sensitive to the Holy Spirit and will be better able to bless others. Pray, sing, speak and praise God in the Spirit and with your mind every day (see BibleKeys lesson 15).

### 2. Pray every day for the gifts of the Holy Spirit

1 Cor 14:1

Be eager! Ask for all the gifts so that you can meet many needs.

### 3. Stretch out your hand

Be available for the Holy Spirit to move through you. When you lay your hands on someone in prayer, expect the Holy Spirit to give you a tongue and interpretation, prophecy, word of knowledge or word of wisdom for that person.

### 4. Be bold

2 Pet 1:21

When you feel moved by the Holy Spirit, be bold and step out in faith. Prophesy! Say, for example:

"I sense that God wants to heal people here today."

"I believe God has given me a word of knowledge."

"Someone here is in need of..."

God will reward your boldness!

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Mark 11:24

## ***Praise Time***

When you have asked God for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, believe that you have received them – and begin thanking him in advance:

Lord, thank you that I can pray to you, sing to you, and praise you in tongues!

Lord, thank you for the gift of prophecy!

Lord, thank you for words of knowledge!

Lord, thank you for words of wisdom!

Lord, thank you for messages in tongues!

Lord, thank you for the gift of interpretation!

Lord, thank you for gifts of healings!

Lord, thank you for the gift of miracles!

Lord, thank you for the gift of faith!

Lord, thank you for the discernment of spirits!

## ***Memo Time***

### **Memorise and Speak God’s Word**

**“Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.”**

*1 Cor 14:1*



# Hearing God's Voice

## About this lesson:

Just as sheep know the voice of their shepherd and willingly follow him, you can know and follow the voice of the Good Shepherd, Jesus. As a believer in him, you're also part of his body, the church. Communication with Jesus – the head of the body – is essential. Praise God for the Holy Spirit, who makes this possible!

Our topics for this lesson:

- **What hearing God's voice means**
- **God's voice in the Old and New Testaments**
- **Hearing from God for fellowship, direction, life and ministry**
- **How to hear God speak**

The world we live in focuses on what is visible and public. In God's kingdom, however, the most important thing is what happens in the secret place. This is where you meet with God and where you learn to hear his voice. Jesus said, "But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

So, find a place that's private, whether in your home or somewhere else. Be sure to have your Bible with you – it's where God's most important words to you personally are found. Bring a pen and notebook because God is going to speak to you, and you'll want to take note of what he says!

*Matt 6:6*

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Joel 2:28

Matt 10:27

Amos 3:7

Exod 19:5

## 1 What hearing God's voice means

Seven hundred years before Jesus' birth, the prophet Joel foretold a time when every son and daughter would prophesy. This is what happened when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost, and now, as sons and daughters, we too can prophesy! Prophecy is to hear God speak and then say out loud what he whispers in our ears: "What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops." **God wants to cooperate with us!** Jesus is our head, and he works together with his body and its members: "**For the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.**"

In the Bible, listen and obey often mean the same thing. God wants us to listen because he wants us to obey: "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine."



## 2 God's voice in the Old Testament

God speaks and his servants listen. We see examples of this from Genesis 1 (v. 28) to Revelation 22 (v. 20). Here are some of them:

Gen 1:28;  
3:8,9

- Adam: Listening and speaking to God came naturally to the first people, and they walked and talked with God in the garden. When Adam and Eve fell into sin, they stopped listening and obeying.

Gen 5:24 NIV

- Enoch: "Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away."

Gen 12:1

- Abraham: "Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.'" Abraham is known as the "father of faith", and he had a lifestyle of listening to and talking with God. Listening to God is an important part of faith!

Gen 18

Gen 6:13,14 NIV

- Noah: God rescued Noah by giving him a prophetic word: "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. So make yourself an ark." Only Noah believed, but afterwards he and his family were glad they listened.

*Num 12:6-8 NIV*

• Moses: "When there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, reveal myself to them in visions, I speak to them in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the Lord." God spoke to Moses face to

*Num 11:24-29*

face! God gave the same Spirit to the seventy leaders that Moses appointed, and they began to prophesy too.

• Joshua, Samuel, David, Solomon, Elijah and Elisha...

• God spoke through all the Old Testament prophets. The phrase "thus says the Lord" is used more than 400 times! The prophets listened and the Lord spoke through them.



## 3 God's voice in the New Testament

In the New Testament, hearing God's voice is no longer reserved for a few prominent individuals – now everyone who is filled with the Holy Spirit can hear him. We mentioned Moses' seventy elders. God gave the same Spirit to them. And Jesus gives his Spirit to us. He anoints and sends:

*Mark 6:7*

• The twelve

*Luke 10:1*

• The seventy-two

*Acts 1:8,15*

• The one hundred and twenty

*Mark 16:17,18*

• Every believer

All can hear and obey God's voice!

Consider Ananias, an ordinary disciple in Damascus:

*Acts 9:10*

"Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, 'Ananias.' And he said, 'Here I am, Lord.'" The Lord then begins to dialogue with Ananias.

*Acts 9:11-16*

Ananias is not an apostle, prophet, bishop or teacher. He's an ordinary church member, who's entrusted with a historic task.

*Acts 22:14-16, 21*

He receives a word of knowledge and a word of wisdom. He is given exact information about where Paul is staying and what his future will be. Ananias goes and lays his hands on Paul, and prophesies. Paul's sight is miraculously restored, he is filled with the Holy Spirit, and Ananias' prophecy turns out to be of worldwide historical significance. What a day in the life of an ordinary believer! And it all began with Ananias listening to the Holy Spirit – probably during his quiet time with the Lord!

# The Church and the Holy Spirit



Isa 50:4 NIV

## 4 Hearing God daily

A prophet's lifestyle includes hearing from God first thing each morning. Listen to this: ***"The Sovereign Lord has given me a well-instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed."*** The prophet first heard from God, then spoke. First the ear, then the mouth. We too can hear from God every morning and receive his wisdom for all we're facing, even before the events of the day begin. Here are some key reasons why we need God to speak to us.

### Fellowship

Nothing's more important than fellowship with God himself. Conversation and communication are part of fellowship. Adam, Enoch and Abraham had fellowship with God – they walked with him and spoke with him. God spoke to Moses

Exod 33:11

John 5:30,19

John 10:27

***"face to face, as a man speaks to his friend"***. And Jesus clearly had intimate fellowship with the Father, often withdrawing to a quiet place to spend time with him. He sought his Father's will in everything and did only what he saw his Father doing. ***You can have this close fellowship with God! Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."*** The sheep keep close to the Shepherd. They listen to him and trust him.

The secret place is the primary place for fellowship with God. Here you can worship him, talk and listen to him – or simply be still and enjoy his presence. This is where your relationship with God grows strong. And inner growth will change your outward life as well! All significant change comes from within.

### Direction

Just as he led his friends in the Old Testament, God wants to lead you in your daily walk. When you seek God for direction, he really wants to help. A regular prayer life is the best foundation for receiving direction from God. Just look at Peter! He went for his regular prayer time, and God began to speak, showing him things that would change his entire life. God's Spirit led him in a way that no one had expected. You too can receive direction as you listen to God!

Acts 10:9

## Family and work

*Gen 12:1-5*

Abraham heard from God on behalf of his whole family and business, and the word of the Lord continued to lead him and his descendants for generations to come. Where is the Lord leading you? Are you willing to take your family to the new things God is calling you to do?

## Ministry

*Prov 29:18*

Hearing from God is essential in ministry. Without vision, prophecy, a word from God, the people perish. Moses went to his "secret place", the tent of meeting, to hear from God on behalf of the people. God spoke to Moses, and Moses spoke to God, and in this way God led his people to the Promised Land.

*Exod 33:7-9*

When choosing a successor, Moses didn't look for a famous or accomplished person, nor a good speaker. He chose Joshua. Joshua was not very bold – why else would he need to be told repeatedly to be strong and courageous? But Joshua had been in the tent of meeting and had learned how to seek God and remain in his presence. In the book of Joshua, God speaks to Joshua constantly, and as a result Joshua is able to lead the people.

*Josh 1:5-9*

*Exod 33:11*

Paul's ministry to Europe began with a word from the Lord.

*Acts 16:9*

"A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.'" Another example is Philip, who received instructions through an angel to go to a desert road. Doing this, he came across an Ethiopian traveller, a court official, who was trying to understand a passage of Scripture. Philip shared the good news with him, and as they came to some water, the man asked to be baptised immediately!

*Acts 8:26-38*

God wants to speak to every minister of the gospel. And when they share what they've heard, it's important to listen and obey: "The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me."

*Luke 10:16*



## 5 How to hear God speak

Now, let's get practical by answering some common questions.

**Q:** How does God speak?

**A:** God can speak audibly, but it is far more common for him to speak inaudibly. His primary way of speaking is through his written Word, the Bible. Everything we hear from God will always align with his Word. If it doesn't, it's not God! Sometimes God will draw attention to a particular verse, and we just know it's his word to us personally. He may also speak through a thought, an idea, or use a picture to tell us something.

**Q:** It sounds like me – can it be God?

**A:** Yes, God often uses our language, our way of thinking and speaking. Note the diversity of the Old Testament prophets or New Testament writers. Musical instruments have their own distinct sound, and it's the same with us. You are his instrument! Through training, trial and error, you will learn to distinguish the voice of the Shepherd from your own.

**Q:** Where can he speak?

**A:** God can speak anywhere – on the train or bus, at your workplace or school – but above all he speaks as you seek him in the quiet place, away from distractions. God says, "Listen to me in silence."

*Isa 41:1*

**Q:** How often can he speak?

**A:** At least every morning! Regularly listening to God trains your ear to hear. It will become easier and easier, both to hear and to bless others with what you've heard. The secret place is the training ground. This place, before the face of God, is the most wonderful place there is!

*Isa 50:4*

**Q:** How can I know that it is God?

**A:** These four things will help you:

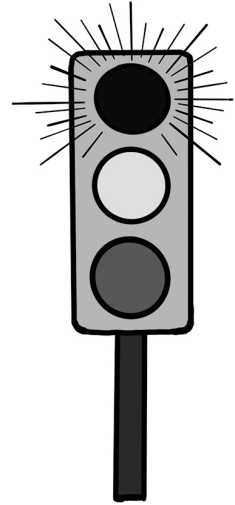
- **The Bible.** Check that it is biblical – if it isn't, it's not God!
- **Your relationship with God.** Live close to God every day – in prayer, in studying his Word and in obedience.

Prov 2:1-5

Listen to God's instructions through Solomon: "My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." It's in a long-term relationship with God that you are trained to receive wisdom and insight. Do you see that? What an amazing life we have!

• **Red/yellow/green light in your spirit.** God can use a red light in your spirit to let you know when something's not of him. You'll often know right away when God says "No", but if you're not sure, or if you can't sense a clear green light telling you "Yes, go ahead", presume it's a yellow light – and wait. At such times, keep praying. In due course you will receive a clear signal of what you should do. Is it dangerous to wait? No, if you don't have a green light, it's dangerous to proceed! Never act just because you feel stressed or pressured to do something. There's a blessed way through the storm (read Acts 27:9–44).

• **The body of Christ.** God will also lead you through the body of Christ – leaders at your church or brothers and sisters you trust. If you think you are the only one who knows what is right, you are probably wrong! Tell a few trusted brothers or sisters what you sense God is saying to you, and you will almost certainly get help in seeing the way forward. If you are married, your spouse will often be your most valuable advisor. Occasionally, it may be necessary to go against the opinions and advice of others, but then you need to be sure it really is God who is leading you, not your own flesh.



Hallelujah! God is speaking to his people today. God is speaking to you! As you listen to him, he'll certainly lead you.

## *Bible Quest*



**Exercise 1:** Describe how people in the Bible listened to God. Use examples from this lesson and add some of your own.

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**Exercise 2:** Choose three Bible verses in this lesson that you think are most important. Explain why.

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## *Praise Time*

Praise God that he speaks to me through the Bible, through the body of Christ, and in my spirit!



## Action Time

1. Have you set a daily quiet time for prayer, Bible reading and listening to the Lord? Note the time here:  

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2. Regularly write down what the Lord is saying to you. Keep a notebook with your Bible. Every day, write the date and expect the Lord to speak to you. Perhaps he will draw your attention to a particular Bible verse. That's wonderful – nothing is as powerful as the Word of God! A spiritual journal like this will remind you of what the Lord has spoken to you. And later on, you'll be able to look back and see that he has done what he said. So start writing today!
3. When you hear God speak, act! Do what he says. You will grow in listening and obeying. And you will bless people throughout your life!

*Matt 25:21*

## Memo Time

### Memorise and Speak God's Word

**"The Sovereign Lord has given me  
a well-instructed tongue,  
to know the word that sustains the weary.  
He wakens me morning by morning,  
wakens my ear to listen  
like one being instructed."**

*Isa 50:4 niv*









## B I B L E   K E Y S

# The Church and the Holy Spirit

*The Church and the Holy Spirit* is the fifth book in the BibleKeys series.

You are not alone! You're part of his church, his body. Equipped by the Holy Spirit for everything you need to do. Three crucial lessons on the church, the gifts of the Holy Spirit and hearing God's voice.

