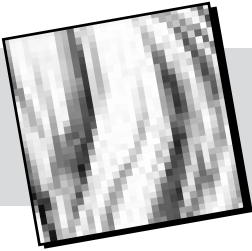


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# spiritbasics

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## 1 Not left alone!

Christianity is different to every other religion on earth! Other religions require people to *do* certain things to find God or to please him or to get his forgiveness - perhaps by praying or doing good works or obeying certain religious rules. They are religions of **self-effort** or **self-improvement**. But Christian faith couldn't be more different! From start to finish, it is about what **God** has done for us, and goes on doing for us. **We are not left alone to struggle on in self-effort!** God himself has made provision for us to know his presence and receive his help through **the Holy Spirit**.

Jesus' disciples were once anxious when he started to talk about leaving them. He met their fears with a promise - a promise that they would not be left alone, because he was going to send God's Spirit to them.

**Read:**

*John 14 v15-18, v25-27*



What promises does Jesus make here?

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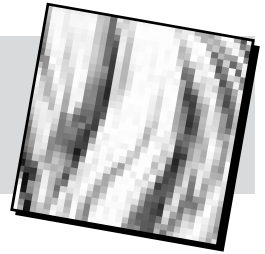
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If you are going to live the Christian life in the way that God intends, you too need the Holy Spirit! Without him, you will end up frustrated, weary and defeated – living life at a level below what God has planned for you. But with him, life is transformed!



*The Holy Spirit is not some 'optional extra' to help us in our Christian life – he is what makes the Christian life both real and possible! In fact, without him, there **is** no Christian life!*

## 2 Always been there!



However, the Holy Spirit didn't suddenly appear when Jesus returned to heaven – as a kind of 'Jesus substitute'. The Holy Spirit has always been there and has always been at work, right from the very beginning.

### 1. ***The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament***

As we look at the Old Testament, it is clear that the Holy Spirit has always been involved in a **wide range of activities**. Look at the following passages (there are lots more we could have looked at!) and note down how the Holy Spirit was involved.




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Genesis 1 v1-2

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Exodus 31 v1-5

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Numbers 11 v16-17, 24-30

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Judges 15 v14-16

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Job 33 v4

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Ezekiel 2 v1-2

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## 2. *The promise of something better!*

While the Holy Spirit was clearly at work in Old Testament times, it seems that he was only given either to 'special' people or for 'special' occasions. However, some of the prophets saw that a day was coming when God was going to do something amazing – he was going to give his Holy Spirit to **all his people!** And this would lead to a change in their very hearts!



### **Read:**

Joel 2 v28-29

Ezekiel 36 v26-27

What stands out to you about these promises?

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Peter quoted from Joel's prophecy on the Day of Pentecost – the day when Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to his disciples – to show that what they were experiencing was simply what God had promised long ago and that therefore no one should be surprised by it.



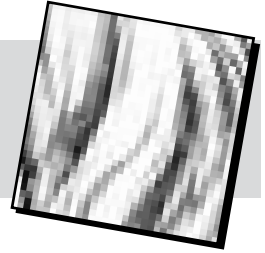
### **Read:**

Acts 2 v1-18; 36-39

*We are certainly among those whom Peter described as being 'far off' (v39). That means that this promise is for **us** too!*

But before we look at how we can receive this promised Holy Spirit, there is one more thing we need to look at; and that is – exactly what do we mean by the Holy Spirit? What – or who – is he?

## 3 Who the Spirit is



The Holy Spirit is not simply God's 'power' or 'influence' or 'presence' with us. The Bible makes clear that, while the Holy Spirit brings all of these, he is far more than all of these. For the Holy Spirit is not **a thing** but **a person**. This is reflected in -

### ■ the language used of him

The Holy Spirit is **always** spoken of as 'he' not 'it' (e.g. John 14v15-18).

### ■ the descriptions made of him

For example, we are told that he has a 'mind' (Romans 8 v27) and can choose what to do (1Corinthians 12 v11); he can be grieved (Ephesians 4 v30) or lied to (Acts 5 v3-4); he can be spoken against (Matthew 12 v31-32) or be resisted (Acts 7 v51). All of these are things that are characteristic of a 'person', not a 'thing' or a 'power'.

### ■ the work done by him

He is seen as the one who helps us (Romans 8 v26) and leads us (Romans 8 v14); who directs us (Acts 13 v1-2) and restrains us (Acts 16 v6-7); who encourages us (Acts 9 v31) and warns us (Acts 20 v23). Once again, all these are things that only a 'person' – not a 'thing' or a 'power' - could do!

But not only is the Holy Spirit a 'person', he is **the person of God himself!** He is described in the same terms that the Father and Son are described – for example, he is seen as **all-knowing** (1Corinthians 2 v11), **all-powerful** (Luke 1 v35) and **all-present** (Psalm 139 v7-12). More than that, he is even called 'God' (2Corinthians 3 v17-18).

This, then, is the Spirit who comes to live within us: not a 'thing' or a 'power', but a **person**; and not any old person, but **the person of God himself!**



**Read:**

*1Corinthians 3 v16; 6 v19*

How are both individual Christians and the church described in these verses?

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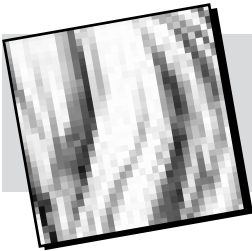
What impact should this have on us?

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*Through the promised Holy Spirit, God himself comes to make his home within us!*



## 4 Jesus and the Spirit

### 1. *The experience of Jesus*

Even Jesus, the Son of God, needed to receive the Holy Spirit before he could start his ministry

– not because he had stopped being God or had become part-God part-man; but rather because, when he came to earth, he chose to lay aside his God-powers so that he could truly become a man. Only when he had been empowered by the Spirit, therefore, could he set out to do the work that he had come to do.

**Read:**

*Luke 3 v21-22*

*Luke 4 v1-2, 14-19*

**Think:** *What do you think this says to us about our need of the Holy Spirit?*



## **2. The promise of Jesus**

But this Holy Spirit was not something that Jesus intended to keep for himself. He promised to give him to his followers too!

**Read:**

*John 7 v37-39*

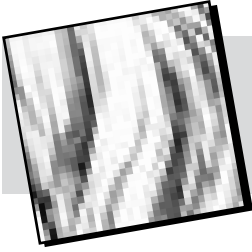
*Luke 24 v49*

*Acts 1 v1-8*

And this is exactly what happened! Ten days after Jesus had returned to his Father in heaven, the promised Holy Spirit came powerfully upon his followers – so powerfully that it could only be described as a 'baptism' – a completely **drenching** of the Spirit that led to an **overflow** of the life of Christ from within.

So, let's turn now to see what happened to them.





# 5 The disciples and the Spirit

Because what happened next is such an exciting – and important – event, let's read the whole story.



## **Read:**

*Acts 2 v1-40*

This experience of the Holy Spirit was not simply some warm inner glow to make them feel nice; nor some sort of inner assurance that they received – but an encounter that **transformed** and **empowered** them for their new life in Christ.

*Baptism in the Spirit is what fills us with God's presence and power.*

Look at the following verses from the book of Acts (the story of the growth of the early church) and note the different aspects of life where the Spirit changed them and gave them power to live differently –

*Acts 2 v42-47*

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*Acts 4 v31-35*

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*Acts 6 v1-6*

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*Acts 7 v54-60*

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*Acts 8 v26-39*

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*Acts 9 v17-22*

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*Acts 13 v1-3*

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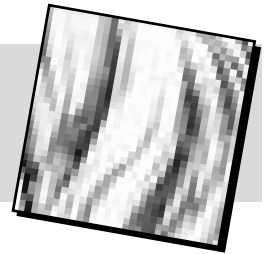


But this powerful experience of the Spirit wasn't something that was simply intended for the first disciples – a sort of divine 'shot in the arm' to

help 'get the church going'. This was to be the experience of **everyone** who became a believer in Jesus, just as Peter said on the Day of Pentecost: "The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2 v39).

*This powerful and life-changing experience of the Spirit is what God wants for **all** his children.*

## 6 **B**aptism in the Holy Spirit



This baptism 'in' (or 'with' – the original Greek word can be translated either way) the Holy Spirit is not a 'second stage' or a 'higher level' of the Christian life; nor is it merely another way of talking about being 'born again'. Rather it lies at the very heart of what it means to be a Christian.

*Baptism in the Holy Spirit is an integral part of what it means to be a Christian. It is God's doorway for us from a natural life to a supernatural life.*

### 1. **Four aspects of becoming a Christian**

To understand what baptism in the Holy Spirit is all about, the best place to look is when it happened for the very first time in the distinctive Christian way. People were so shocked by it that Peter had



to explain what was happening and how they could experience this for themselves.

**Read:**

*Acts 2 v37-38*



Verse 38 includes **four aspects** of what it means to become a Christian. What are they?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

**All four of these are needed to complete the Christian experience.** To use an illustration: these four things are like the four strands of a rope that are entwined around each other to make up the rope. Can you separate the strands? Of course you can. But it is the very fact of the strands being intertwined together that makes the rope what it is and that gives it its strength.

So it is with being a Christian. The **four aspects** in Acts 2 v38 (repentance, baptism, knowing the assurance of forgiveness, receiving the Holy Spirit) are **together** what makes someone a Christian.

These four things may not always happen in the same way or in the same order (e.g. compare Acts 2v38 with Acts 10v44-48); but **all four are needed** for our Christian experience to be complete and strong – just like the strands of the rope. Whenever the early church leaders found someone who wasn't baptised in the Holy Spirit – for whatever reason – they took immediate steps to pray for them to receive this gift of God and so to complete their Christian experience (e.g. Acts 8 v12-17; 9 v17-19; 19 v1-7).



**Think:** *Do I know that these four aspects are in place in my own life? If they are not, then are there steps I need to take?*

## 2. *Signs of baptism in the Spirit*

People sometimes ask, 'How can I **know** when I have baptised in the Holy Spirit?' The answer is simple: **there will be change!** Because baptism in the Spirit is about receiving the presence and power of God that leads to change, just like Jesus promised (Acts 1 v8).

But this 'change' is often expressed in different ways in different people. Some common things that people experience, however, include –

- knowing God in a closer way
- having a greater assurance of salvation
- finding prayer easier
- experiencing greater spiritual sensitivity
- knowing new power in life
- discovering more victory over sin
- receiving various gifts of the Spirit
- finding the Bible comes 'alive'
- experiencing more joy
- becoming aware of 'spiritual warfare'
- experiencing boldness in talking about Jesus to others

*Ask your group leader or mentor what difference baptism in the Holy Spirit made to them.*



### **Speaking in tongues**

While there might be great variety in what people experience when they are baptised in the Holy Spirit, one **consistent sign** in the book of Acts was that those who received the Spirit also **spoke in tongues**. On every occasion but one, speaking in tongues is specifically mentioned – and even on the other one occasion, it is clear that something

tangible and observable happened.

Look at the following Bible passages and see how speaking in tongues is noted. Sometimes it is clearly stated; at other times it is clearly implied.

It is important to remember that **speaking in tongues is not 'gibberish'**. It is not something that people 'make up' or are they getting carried away in some sort of trance or frenzy. (Look at them when they speak in tongues – they really do look quite normal!)  
passages that are mentioned but 'something' not given

'Tongues' is a **real language**, but one that the user has not learned (in the way we might learn a foreign language). It is a **gift of the Holy Spirit** that has a number of purposes –

- **to help us communicate 'spirit to spirit' with our heavenly Father**, without having to worry about getting the words right or even knowing exactly what we're praying about (e.g. Romans 8 v26-27; 1Corinthians 14v2).
- **to build us up spiritually** (e.g. 1Corinthians 14v4). It is as if the Holy Spirit is 'energising' our own spirit when we use the prayer language he has given us.
- **to help us worship God**. When the crowd heard the disciples speaking in tongues on the Day of Pentecost, they didn't hear them preaching the gospel, but worshipping God. (See what they say in Acts 2 v11!)

This language can be 'of men and of angels'(1Corinthians 13 v1) – i.e. a **human language** (that someone who speaks that language would recognise, as on the Day of Pentecost, Acts 2 v11) or a **spiritual language**

(that therefore no one on earth can understand, unless God gives the gift of 'interpretation of tongues' – 1Corinthians 12 v10). While the first of these is less common, Mary Norridge (the wife of one of our church leaders) discovered she was doing it when she spoke in tongues in a church in Bombay, India, and the tongue was recognised by two non-Christian visitors as a Persian (Iranian) dialect that they spoke!

### **3. Gifts of the Holy Spirit**

Another area that is opened up to us when we are baptised in the Holy Spirit is the gifts of the Spirit. The word for 'gifts' in the original language of the Bible is 'charismata' – which means 'grace-gifts'. In other words, they are nothing to do with our natural skills or abilities; nor are they rewards for what we have done. Rather, they are **sheer gifts of love** from God to his children - freely given, and distributed in the church with great variety according to his will.

*Note down the gifts that are mentioned in the following passages and make sure you understand what each one means by discussing it with your group leader or mentor.*

Romans 12 v3-8  
1 Corinthians 12 v7-11

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## 4. Streams of living water

While baptism in the Holy Spirit is most certainly a **personal** experience, it is not meant to be a *private* experience, however. As we have already seen, spiritual gifts may build **me** up, but they are also there to do **others** good. Baptism in the Spirit is meant to **flow outwards!**



When Jesus described what having the Holy Spirit would be like, he said that "streams of living water will flow from within" (John 7 v38). In other words, these 'streams of life' would not be able to be contained, but would spill over to bless others.

Look at the following verses, and note down some other ways that the Spirit's life can spill over to touch other people.

Luke 4 v18-19

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Acts 4 v8-12

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Acts 4 v31

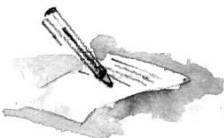
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Acts 6 v5, 8-10

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Being full of the Spirit is not just important for your personal life. It is important for the church and for the world! It is only by the Spirit that the church is able to fulfil its mission, as streams of life flow from God's people to bring freshness and fruitfulness to places and people that are otherwise dead. (See Ezekiel 47 v1-12, where the temple is a symbol of God's people).

For some people, this is exciting and a further reason to seek an experience of the Spirit. For others, the thought of witnessing to unbelievers or praying for healing is quite scary! It can even cause some people to hold back from seeking to be baptised in the Holy Spirit, waiting for a time when they feel better 'prepared'.



The problem is that we can wait forever! None of

us ever feel fully prepared for this kind of ministry. But it is not maturity or experience that enable us to do these things, but the baptism of the Spirit! We just need to 'go for it'!

**Think:** *Do you want spiritual life to overflow from you and bless others? Are you prepared to let the Spirit have his way, trusting him with your fears?*

# How do I get started?

OK – so that's enough theory! Time to get down to business! How do I receive this baptism in the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised? By following these simple steps –

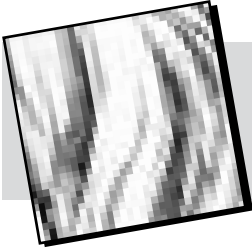
## 1. **Believe!**

The first step to receiving anything from God is to **believe** that he has made a promise and that this promise is **for me**.

**Read:**

*John 7 v37-39*





### *James 1v5-8*

Read aloud some of the Bible's promises about baptism in the Holy Spirit (there are lots throughout this book) as a means of building your faith about this.

## **2. Ask!**

Just vaguely 'wondering' about God's promises won't get us anywhere! Jesus encouraged us to ask – and he specifically encouraged us to ask our Heavenly Father to give us the Holy Spirit. Tell him how hungry you are for the life of his Spirit!

### **Read:**

*Luke 11 v9-13*



You don't need long or fancy prayers! Simply ask God to forgive you for anything that has got in the way of your relationship with him, and then tell him what you want and how desperately you want it!

## **3. Receive!**

Don't get anxious and try to 'make something happen' – simply receive from God in your heart! You don't have to keep calling out to him to do it – set your heart and mind at rest – relax – and receive! It's rather like being given a glass of water; someone may offer it to us, but then we have to take it and drink.



### **Read:**

*John 20 v21-22*

*Acts 8 v14-17*

As you can see from these passages, it may be

helpful to have someone pray with you and lay hands on you. You may feel something physical (such varied things as heat, breath, tingling, trembling, falling over, a quiet presence – the Spirit moves in so many different ways!). But it is not about what you feel or do not feel; it is about surrendering every aspect of your life to him and receiving his power within.

## 4. *Speak!*

As we have already seen, speaking in tongues is a normal consequence of being baptised in the Holy Spirit. So it is important to step out with this new gift. As you do –

- **Don't let your mind get in the way.** We always want to explain or understand everything – but you can't where tongues is concerned! This is about the Spirit not the mind!
- **Speak out whatever words or sounds come into your mind.** Remember: nothing is going to 'take you over'; and words aren't going to tumble out of your mouth involuntarily! The Spirit puts words within you for *you* to speak out in faith, just as in Acts 2 v4, which tells us that **"they began to speak as the Spirit enabled them."** So, go on – step out and speak out the words – no matter how strange they might sound or how few they might be!
- **Singing sometimes helps.** Some people find it easier to start singing out the words rather than speaking them out, simply because words often flow more easily that way.





- **Don't get anxious or try to 'help the Spirit out'.** Constantly praying 'Thank you Lord, thank you Lord, thank you Lord...' just fills your mind with other words that get in the way! Relax and receive.

*Without the Holy Spirit, you can't speak;  
but without you, the Spirit won't speak!*

## **A testimony**

When I myself was baptised in the Holy Spirit, I had a powerful encounter with God – he knocked me out of my chair in fact! But I didn't speak in tongues straight away – though I later realised I could have done! The trouble was, there was just one word going round in my mind – and I didn't speak it out, first because it was only one word, and second because it sounded a bit like Latin (which I had learnt at school) and so I thought I was making it up. And so, for over a week, I didn't speak in tongues, despite praying to do so every day – and despite the fact that this strange word kept going round in my head whenever I prayed! Eventually I felt God saying that he wouldn't give me any more words until I had spoken out that one. As I did, a whole host of other words began to follow! So, don't worry if everything doesn't come all at once – just keep stepping out!

*Ask your group leader or mentor what happened to him/her when they were baptised in the Holy Spirit.*

## **5. Use!**

It is important to now use this new gift that God has given you – and to be open to the new things

he will want to do through you! Like anything else in life, the more we use something, the easier it becomes. So –

- Pray in tongues very day
- Expect some of the Spirit's gifts to start working through you
- Look for opportunities to share your faith or pray with people

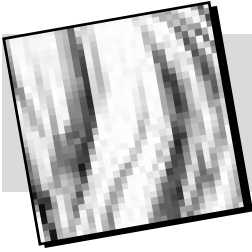
*So over to you! Your Heavenly Father is waiting, eager to give what he has promised to those who ask!*



## **A**ppendix: **But what about..?**

For some Christians, thinking about the Holy Spirit in this way raises lots of questions – especially if they are from a background that has not been used to thinking about him like this. Now, if that's not you, then you can miss out this final section. But for those of you who still have questions, here are some of the more common ones.





## 1. *Didn't I receive the Holy Spirit when I became a Christian?*

Of course you did! Indeed, without the Holy Spirit, you would never have been able to find God, let alone get to know him! But the Holy Spirit doesn't simply want to work **upon** our life; he wants to work **within** our life; to fill us with those 'rivers of living water' that Jesus promised would flow from within the very depths of our being (John 7v37-39). Jesus wants, not just to **save** us, but to **equip** us for his work, just as he himself was equipped (e.g. Luke 3v21-22; 4v1,14-19) and just as he promised his followers (e.g. Acts 1 v8).

In fact, Jesus himself spoke to his disciples of two phases of the Spirit's work in their lives in John 14 v15-17, where he distinguished between the Spirit being **with** them now but being **in** them later.

## 2. *Isn't baptism in the Spirit the same thing as 'conversion'?*

No! They are two **aspects** of our four-fold Christian initiation experience, but they are not the same thing. While they should ideally happen at the same time, the truth is, they don't always - even in the New Testament, as we have seen. When they do happen simultaneously, it is wonderful; but many Christians settle for a 'conversion' that is a far cry from what the New Testament promises - a 'baptising' in the Spirit - that is, an immersion, a drenching, a soaking, of the life of the Spirit that leads to an overflow of the life of Christ from within.

To see baptism in the Spirit as our 'conversion'

simply misses things however. For example –

- Acts 2 is clearly not about regeneration (**new birth**), but empowerment, (**new power**), as Jesus himself made clear (Acts 1 v5 & 8).
- To say that the disciples had experienced nothing of the life of Jesus before Pentecost is to neglect the evidence of the gospels. For example, Peter confesses Jesus as Christ and is blessed for it (Matthew 16 v13-17); the disciples are sent out with power and authority (Luke 9 v1-2); Jesus is already calling his followers his 'little flock' (Luke 12 v32). All of this hardly seems characteristic of people who were not yet born again, or who at the very least had not had some significant experience of Jesus.
- Jesus has already "breathed [on them]" in John 20 v22 (the words 'on them' are not in the original Greek). This cannot be John's description of Pentecost, for Jesus is still with them in the period after the resurrection. Interestingly enough, the word John uses here for 'breathed' is the word that is used in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) wherever a **new creation** was involved (e.g. Genesis 2 v7; Ezekiel 37 v9). This must at least open up the possibility that, if there is a particular point in the gospels where the disciples were 'born again', that John 20v22 may well be it. The gift of the Spirit at Pentecost, therefore, is not about new birth (which has already happened to them, either in John 20 or at

some point earlier in the gospels), but new power.

### **3. Does God want all Christians to speak in tongues?**

Yes! Not because this somehow makes you a 'better' Christian; but because it is God's gift to his children to help them praise and pray – especially in difficult circumstances. Why would God want some of his children to be able to pray more easily than others?

As we have seen, in every case but one in the NT, when people received the gift of the Holy Spirit, they also spoke in tongues – and even in that one case, it is clear that something observable happened! Why should we think the God who is the same 'yesterday, today and for ever' acts any differently today?

Sometimes we are asked, 'But **must** I speak in tongues?' (a question that always makes tongues seem rather like a nasty dose of medicine that God wants to force down our throats!). The answer, of course, is 'No!' For God never forces his gifts on anyone! But why would anyone not want to receive a gift that God makes available to all his children?

*Must I speak in tongues? NO!*

*May I speak in tongues? – YES!*

But what about 1Corinthians 12 v30? Doesn't Paul say here that he doesn't expect everyone to speak in tongues?

Absolutely! – but only in the **context** in which he says that! And the context of chapters 12-14 is one of using spiritual gifts within the church to build

one another up – i.e. in a **public context**. But Paul also makes clear in the same part of his letter (14v5) that he wants all Christians to be able to use this gift! Since he is unlikely to have forgotten what he had just written, it seems clear that he is referring here to **private use** of tongues (i.e. in one's own prayer). In other words, he is saying that not everyone will have the gift of **bringing a message** to the church in tongues; but everyone can have the gift of **bringing a prayer** to God in tongues, whether alone or with others.

#### **4. How should we describe this experience?**

Some Christians get very dogmatic about the language that should be used of the Spirit's coming to us. Some insist we should speak of 'baptism in' (or 'with' or 'of') the Spirit. Others feel more comfortable talking about 'being filled' with the Spirit. So, which is correct?

The truth is, the New Testament uses a **wide variety of language** to describe the Spirit's coming to people. For example: (the number in brackets refers to the number of times the expression is used in the New Testament) -

- baptise in the Holy Spirit (7x)  
e.g., Acts 1 v5; 1Corinthians 12 v13
- Spirit being/coming on people (10x) e.g.,  
Acts 1 v8; Luke 4 v18
- being filled with the Holy Spirit (10x)  
e.g., Lk 1 v15; Acts 2 v2,4; Eph 5 v18
- full of the Holy Spirit (5x)  
e.g., Lk 4 v1; Acts 6 v3, 7 v55
- receiving the Holy Spirit (16x)  
e.g., Jn 20 v22; Acts 2 v38, 8 v15;

- sending the Holy Spirit (5x)  
e.g., Galatians 4 v6; John 14 v26

And even this list is not exhaustive!

From this it should be clear that there is both a **considerable variety** and a **considerable overlap** of the language used in the New Testament to describe the Spirit's coming to people. What matters is not the language we use to describe his coming, but our knowing that he has indeed come – to me! – and our openness to “keep on being filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5 v18) so that we do not become stuck in a single past experience.

## 5. I already get 'pictures' – does this mean I am already baptised in the Spirit?

Well, it might do! But then again, it might not!

The fact that you have been getting prophetic pictures certainly shows that you have a **sensitivity to the Holy Spirit**. But be careful that this does not become a convenient excuse for not facing up to both the theology and the challenge of being truly baptised – immersed, drenched! – in the life of the Spirit and **all** that this brings (and not just the bits you are 'comfortable' with!). Ask yourself the question: in the light of what I have read in this booklet, have I truly been baptised in the Holy Spirit?

## 6. *Isn't the age of the Spirit's gifts over?*

Some Christians believe that the Holy Spirit's work recorded in Acts was simply for those days – to help get the church established, or to serve until the Bible was completed. After that, the gifts of the Spirit ceased. However, **there is nothing in the New Testament itself that suggests this!** On the contrary the empowering of the Spirit is often linked with Christ's continuing mission through his followers to the end of the age (e.g. Mark 16: v5-20; Acts 1v6-8).

An argument often used to support this view is Paul's statement in 1Corinthians 13 that spiritual gifts will one day pass away and that "when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears" (v10). Perfection is interpreted as 'the Bible' and 'the imperfect' as spiritual gifts (since Paul has just said that we only 'prophesy in part', v9). However, this cannot be Paul's meaning. All scholars accept that a basic rule for interpreting Scripture is that **it cannot mean now what it never meant then.** Since 'perfection' could not possibly have meant 'the Bible' to the Corinthians (since 'the Bible' did not exist at that time!), Paul must have meant something else. In context 'perfection' refers to Jesus' return and the kingdom he will bring, as the contrast between 'now' and 'then' in v12 makes clear. When Jesus comes and establishes his kingdom in all its fulness, of course we won't need the gifts of the Spirit – for Jesus himself will be right there in the centre!

This 'dispensationalist'<sup>1</sup> or 'cessationist'<sup>2</sup> approach simply ends up explaining away our powerlessness and leaves us with nothing more than a mind-centred faith. But if God had wanted our faith to be just about the mind, he could simply have made us



as very large brains. But he didn't! We are whole beings with a body, mind and spirit; and God still wants to rule over, and fill, and use, each aspect. Don't settle for a cerebral Christianity and then rationalise this with theology!

<sup>1</sup> 'Dispensationalism' sees God's dealings with people throughout history as being characterised by well-defined and separate time-periods (or 'dispensations'). In each of these, God acts in ways particular to that dispensation. Hence, dispensationalists see the operation of the Spirit's gifts as now past, because that 'dispensation' is now over. However, the Bible itself gives no grounds for such an interpretation of God's dealings with us.

<sup>2</sup> 'Cessationist' – the belief that spiritual gifts 'ceased' after the apostolic period.

## ***7. I've been prayed for – but nothing happened***

We understand that this is very frustrating! But what do you do in other areas of life when you pray and nothing happens straight away? You pray again – and again – and again – until you have an answer from God. So, don't give up!

Jesus said, "Ask and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" – a saying which, in Luke's gospel is linked with receiving the Holy Spirit (Luke 11 v9-13). The original wording used is a 'present continuous tense' – in other words, "Keep on asking... keep on seeking... keep on knocking..." If you do, you'll get there in the end!

So –

- **Don't be discouraged!** Keep asking, seeking, knocking!
- **Don't be deceived!** The devil loves to get us believe his lie that God wants others to have this gift, but not us!
- **Don't be afraid!** God is a loving Father who only knows how to give good gifts to his children!
- **Don't be conned!** It is easy to feel that 'nothing has happened' because we haven't 'prayed enough' or 'been holy enough'. But this is a *gift* – so how can you **earn** it?!
- **Don't be isolated!** It's easy to sit and stew in self-pity if 'nothing happens'. Don't do it! Talk to a friend, leader or your mentor.

Above all, remember the **promise** of Jesus: "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him" (Luke 11 v13).

*Other helpful books*

*You Will have Power, Tony Gray,  
(Roots & Shoots series, available from  
Salt & Light Ministries) ISBN 1 901075 70 2*

*A Handbook on Holy Spirit Baptism, Don  
Basham,(Whitaker House) ISBN 0 883680 0 33*

*Tongues, Interpretation and Prophecy, Don  
Basham, (Whitaker House) ISBN 0 883680 0 41*

*They Speak with Other Tongues, John Sherrill,  
(Chosen Books) ISBN 0 800791 304*

*Spiritual Gifts, John Micklefield and Dave Perry,  
(Roots and Shoots series, available from  
Salt & Light Ministries) ISBN 1 901075 10 9*

*The Hidden Power of Speaking in Tongues,  
by Mahesh Chavda (Destiny Image)  
ISBN 0 768217 1 3*