

PART 2

Basic Knowledge

PURPOSE OF THIS SECTION:

To help you gain a basic understanding of who God is, who you are in Christ, and what God has done to enable you to live by his power.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS:

1. Knowing God Better

- ♦ Why is knowing God important?
- ♦ What do people believe about God?
- ♦ Three basic truths about God

2. Knowing Who We Are In Christ

- ♦ Why is our self-image important?
- ♦ On what should we base our self-image?
- ♦ Two basic truths about us

3. Knowing God's Power for Living

- ♦ Batteries are included!
- ♦ Getting to know the Holy Spirit
- ♦ Living Spirit-filled lives

Introduction to Part 2

At the beginning of Part 1, we likened the Christian life to building a house. We started with the foundation—basic commitments to Christ and to spiritual growth through God’s word and God’s family. Now what do we do? Begin building the house! But where should we start?

It is frequently noted that what we believe will largely determine how we behave, and this is exactly the case. What’s more, activity without adequate understanding can lead to all sorts of problems—just as trying to build the second story of a house before establishing the first can create a disaster! Therefore, as we seek to effectively live out our new life in Christ, there are some basic things we need to know. Paul prays for us in Ephesians 1:17-19 concerning these very things:

“I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.”

Chapter 4 begins where Paul does—with seeking to know God better. Who is God? What is he like? Then, in Chapter 5, we consider who we are in Christ. What exactly is this “hope” and “inheritance” to which we have been called? And finally, in Chapter 6, we turn our attention to knowing God’s power for living. What has God done to enable us to live lives that please him? Read on!

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Knowing God Better

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

—A. W. TOZER, *The Knowledge of the Holy*

I sometimes find it amusing to wait in the check-out line at the grocery store. The magazines and tabloids sprawled among the batteries and breath-mints practically jump out at you with such incredible headlines as, “Space Aliens Hold Elvis’ Brain Hostage” or “Losing Pounds While Pounding Donuts”!

Occasionally, however, something of genuine significance rises above the typically absurd fare, and such was the case with the cover of a major news magazine a number of years ago. Superimposed on a photograph of deep space were three little words that posed the most important of all questions: “Who is God?”

WHY IS KNOWING GOD IMPORTANT?

How would you answer the question the magazine raised? What comes into your mind when you think about God? The cover article failed to give any clear and authoritative identification, and, sadly, those of us who believe in him do not necessarily come to a consensus either.

Is it really possible to know the truth about God when there are so many conflicting ideas and opinions out there? I believe it is. And we *must* pursue this truth, for knowing God is the only way to make sense out of life. English theologian J. I. Packer, in his classic book, *Knowing God*, explains:

Knowing about God is crucially important for the living of our lives. As it would be cruel to an Amazonian tribesman to fly him to London, put him down without explanation in Trafalgar Square and leave him, as one who knew nothing of English or England, to fend for himself, so we are cruel to ourselves if we try to live in this world without knowing about the God whose world it is and who runs it. The world becomes a strange, mad, painful place, and life in it a disappointing and unpleasant business, for those who do not know about God. Disregard the study of God, and you sentence yourself to stumble and blunder through life blindfolded, as it were, with no sense of direction and no understanding of what surrounds you. This way you can waste your life and lose your soul.¹

Knowing God—understanding facts about him and enjoying friendship with him—is our single greatest privilege as Christians. Let’s consider this a little more closely.

Knowing God should be our major pursuit in life

What sort of things do you like to boast about? Your education? Your physical abilities? Your money and possessions? The world gives special awards and recognition for such things, but God is impressed with something altogether different:

This is what the LORD says: “Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let those who boast boast about this: that they understand and know me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight” (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

What God wants displayed in our lives is not our human accomplishments (however significant they may be), but rather our understanding and knowledge of him. Nothing else is worth boasting about—nor is any other pursuit more rewarding! “So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD” (Hosea 6:3, ESV).

Knowing God is the basis for effective Christian living

Is it any wonder that Paul, when seeking to encourage believers in their faith, prayed that they might “know [God] better” (Ephesians 1:17)? Surely he understood the foundational nature of such knowledge when it comes to living the Christian life.

Think about it. Everything we do as Christians is affected by our understanding of God. When we approach God in prayer, for example, what kind of person do we think we are talking to? Does he really hear us? Does he care about the struggles in our lives? Will he actually answer our prayers?

Or consider the area of worship. According to the Bible, God is seeking “true worshipers” (John 4:23). What is it going to take for us to fulfill that role? The pastor of the church I attended during a few of my college years explained this well:

If our worship is to be meaningful, if it is to be acceptable, we must seek to conceive of God as he has revealed himself to us. An intimate knowledge of the person of God is perhaps the greatest motivation to true, overflowing, whole-life worship. When we begin to know God as he is, our response has to be that of magnifying him, giving him glory for who he is and what he does for us.²

Are you getting the picture? Our knowledge of God affects how we pray, how we worship, how we respond to God’s word, how we talk about him with others, and everything else involved in the Christian life.

Knowing God is what eternal life is all about

How would you define “eternal life”? Most of us see it as something that begins when we pass from this life, and then goes on forever. But Jesus describes it in a completely different way.

While praying to his Father, he said, “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only

true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3). In other words, eternal life is not so much everlasting life as it is knowledge of the everlasting God who gives us life.

What an exciting thing to realize! We can experience eternal life *right now*, as we come into a relationship with “the only true God” through Jesus Christ (see 1 John 5:11-13). And let’s be clear on the necessity of Christ in making this connection. It was the Lord himself who said, “No one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (Matthew 11:27). Jesus alone can provide us with access to an intimate, personal knowledge of the one true God.

WHAT DO PEOPLE BELIEVE ABOUT GOD?

Of course, saying that Jesus is the only way to know God raises some understandable objections. Isn’t such a claim narrow-minded and intolerant—even arrogant? What about other religions and the millions of people committed to them? Are they all wrong about God?

“Everybody is right about God”

It is often assumed that all religions ultimately teach the same thing about God, but this is simply not the case. In most forms of Buddhism, for example, there is no God. In Hinduism, there are many gods. In both Islam and Judaism, there is only one God, but Jesus is not part of the picture (at least in terms of being God), as he is in Christianity.

Can all of these religions be right about God? Sure they can, if truth is relative—that is, if we’re willing to accept the idea that what is true for one person may not be true for another. This works fine when it comes to identifying, say, the best flavor of ice-cream (for me, it’s coconut), but when applied to the truth about God, we have to throw common sense out the

window. To say, for example, that a Muslim and an atheist are both right about God is to say that God both exists and doesn't exist at the same time! Can we really accept such a conclusion?

The point, which is a really important one for us to affirm today, is that truth is *exclusive*—it excludes that which contradicts it. And the things people believe about God—whether deeply religious people or those with no faith at all—are very much contradictory. They can't all be right. They are perhaps all wrong, but somewhere in the mix of beliefs there exists the exclusive truth about God. Is it possible that Christianity is telling us the truth? If it is, then all other religions are excluded from being equally true, for Scripture is very clear about Jesus being both God (John 1:1) and the only way to God (John 14:6).

Narrow? Sure. But truth is often narrow, if you think about it. I live toward the end of a cul-de-sac, so the truth about getting to my house is very specific and exclusive. You can't just take any street you would like and expect to get there! At some point, you must turn onto Laurel Lane. The way to God, according to the Bible, is also narrow, but not because God wants to make it hard for us to get there. Rather, he wants us to “seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us” (Acts 17:27).

“God does not exist”

For some people, there is no God. This conclusion is often reached in light of evil and suffering—whether experienced personally, or observed in the world. How could there be a God in light of such circumstances? It's a fair question. However, as C. S. Lewis argues in part 1 of his classic work, *Mere Christianity*, the very fact that we view some things as wrong or evil suggests that there is Somebody or Something beyond us that serves as our standard of goodness, enabling us to judge evil as evil. In other words, evil turns out to be reasonable evidence *for* God.

But the fact of evil is not why most atheists believe as they do. The Bible declares, “Fools say in their hearts, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, their deeds are vile, there is no one who does good” (Psalm 14:1). The implication here is that being an atheist is more a matter of convenience than conviction. If God is out of the picture, then we can do whatever we want with our lives—no accountability, no consequences (other than what society determines), no worries. Sounds enticing, perhaps, but Paul brings us back to reality:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of human beings who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse (Romans 1:18-20).

“God exists, but he doesn’t care about us”

Among those who believe in the existence of God, many hold pictures of him that are less than encouraging and miles from the truth.

Some people imagine God behind a massive closed door with a “DO NOT DISTURB” sign hanging on the doorknob. Others envision him as a divine policeman, hiding behind the roadside bushes on his motorcycle, waiting to catch us doing something wrong. Still others view God as a kind of “old man Potter” from the movie, *It’s a Wonderful Life*—old, wealthy, and in control of just about everything, but not caring one cent about the welfare of anyone but himself. Very often these ideas are a result of how we experienced our earthly parents—especially our father.

But against such insidious concepts of God come these wonderful words from God himself: “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10).

Indeed, “The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit” (Psalm 34:18). “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7).

“God cares about us, but he lacks power to help us”

We believe that God exists, and that he truly cares for us, but when tragedy strikes (as it frequently does in this fallen world), he seems strangely absent. Can’t he do something about our hardships? If he can, then why doesn’t he?

Such questions are honest ones that we probably all ask at one time or another, but the problem is not a powerless God. The very first thing we learn about God in the Bible is that he “created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). That’s power! And when we read all the way to the end of Scripture, God’s power is in full force, administering justice and bringing into his kingdom all those who have trusted in him (Revelation 19-22).

In the meantime, pain and hardship is very much a reality in our lives. Jesus himself said to his first followers, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Similarly, Paul said, “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). Why does it have to be this way? Ultimately, God only knows. But as John Stott reminds us, “The God who allows us to suffer, once suffered himself in Christ, and continues to suffer with us and for us today. The cross of Christ is the proof of God’s personal, loving solidarity with us in our pain.”³

“God cares about us, but he doesn’t care about sin”

It’s a bit of a surprise to discover that this idea—that sin is no big deal to God—is found among some who call themselves Christians. However, all one has to do is look at the cross and ask,

“What was Jesus doing there?” and it becomes abundantly clear that sin matters a great deal to God. Jesus “bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness” (1 Peter 2:24).

God hates sin (see, for example, Proverbs 6:16-19), and he will never let it go unpunished. As the prophet Habakkuk declared concerning God, “Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing” (Habakkuk 1:13). Either Christ bears the penalty of our sin, as we trust in him alone for salvation, or we bear it ourselves. God’s great love for us does not cause him to overlook our sin, but rather provides us with the very Savior we need. Such is the nature of God. Let’s focus in on the truth about him a little more closely.

THREE BASIC TRUTHS ABOUT GOD

God is truly an awesome mystery. Scripture declares that there is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Timothy 2:5), but upon closer examination, we discover that “God is one in being or essence who exists eternally in three distinct coequal persons.”⁴ This is pretty heady stuff, I realize, so let me put it a bit more simply: God is a fellowship—Father, Son (Jesus), and Holy Spirit. The traditional term for this mystery is “Trinity,” from a Latin word meaning “threeness.”

Why does this matter? For one thing, this is the truth about God as revealed in the Bible, and truth matters. But, more specifically, it shows us why Jesus is the ultimate issue in our search for God, for if we reject him, we are in fact rejecting God—the only One who can save us from our sins. This is precisely why we cannot accept the popular notion that all religions are basically the same, for only Christianity teaches that Jesus is “our great God and Savior” (Titus 2:13).

So what does the Bible reveal about this mysterious fellowship we call God? What he is really like? What are the basics?

God is spirit

What do you think God looks like? An old man with a long, white beard? A pillar of fire or a thundering cloud? The Bible says, “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

Notice that this verse doesn’t say “God is *a* spirit” or God is *the* Spirit,” but rather “God *is* spirit.” He exists as infinite spirit, and as such he is invisible and immaterial (that is, he has no body or anything physical that we can see or touch). Granted, this makes our relationship with him unlike any other we experience, but it also means that he can be everywhere at the same time! “Where can I flee from your presence,” asks King David (Psalm 139:7), and the implied answer is, “Nowhere!” And while this is bad news for those who want to avoid God, it is a great comfort for those of us who love him and want him around. He is *always* with us!

Further, to affirm that God is spirit is to help us understand that we must ultimately relate to him on the spiritual level. For example, “his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth,” and this means that true worship is not dependant upon geographical location or physical posture. There’s nothing wrong with being in a church building or bowing our heads as we pray, but such things are not required for our worship to be acceptable. God responds to our *hearts*—no matter where we are or what we are doing. We need to remember this.

God is light

The Bible also says, “God is light; in him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). This is simply another way of saying that God is *holy*—absolutely pure and unlike anything we have ever known. There is nothing about him that is unholy, impure, evil or false (unlike us!). This is the

way God is, and he will never change (Malachi 3:6). And this truth is comforting news, for it means that God's actions toward us are always pure and just.

Further, we, as Christians, are to reflect God's holy character in our lives: "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them" (Ephesians 5:8-11). In other words, "As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do" (1 Peter 1:15). It is sheer nonsense to claim that we know and love God if we willfully live in darkness, or sin (see 1 John 1:6).

God is love

Because God is holy, we cannot enjoy him unless our sins are forgiven, and God's great love for us has made this possible: "God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 4:8-10).

God is love. Therefore, when he loves (and he always does!), he is merely being himself. He is not responding to something attractive in us. Rather, "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). This is a staggering—and yet comforting—thing to realize. Jerry Bridges explains:

Any time we are tempted to doubt God's love for us, we should go back to the cross. We should reason somewhat in this fashion: If God loved me enough to give his Son to die for me when I was his enemy, surely he loves me enough to care for me now that I am his child. Having loved me to the ultimate extent of the cross, he cannot possibly fail to love me in times of adversity.⁵

And just like holiness, God's love is to be reflected in our lives as well: "Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11). "Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Ephesians 5:1-2).

Do you see what happens when we begin to focus intently on who God is? Our faith is strengthened, our hearts are encouraged, and we come away desiring more!

How can that desire be satisfied? The most important thing we can do is read our Bibles with an eye toward learning more about God and growing closer to him (I find the Psalms particularly helpful in this regard). As R. C. Sproul beautifully puts it, "A thirst for the knowledge of God should drive us to drink deeply at the fountain of Scripture."⁶ The key to such "drinking" is the attitude of our hearts, as God himself explains: "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). So what are we waiting for?

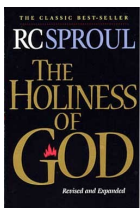
Questions for review and reflection:

1. How would you explain to someone why it is so important for us to seek to understand and know God?
2. What are some of the wrong ideas about God that you have held in the past? Where did they come from?
3. What does the Bible mean when it says that “God is spirit”? What implications does this truth have for our relationship with God?
4. When the Bible says “God is light,” it is saying that God is *holy*. What does it mean to be holy? How can we reflect the holiness of God in our lives?
5. Do you ever wrestle with doubting God’s love for you? How does the biblical teaching that “God is love” enable you to overcome those nagging doubts?
6. What specific things can you be doing on a regular basis to get to know God better?

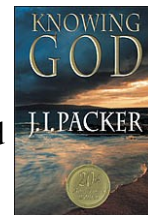
Bible passages for further study:

Acts 17:22-34; Psalm 8; 139; Isaiah 6:1-8; 40:18-31; 1 John 4:7-21

Helpful resources for further learning:



Two classic books that have helped me to know God better are R. C. Sproul, *The Holiness of God*, and J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*. In addition, I find the book of Psalms particularly helpful in both understanding God and how I can relate to him.



Knowing Who We Are In Christ

“The reason so many Christians are not enjoying the maturity and freedom which is their inheritance in Christ is because they hold wrong self-perceptions. They don’t see themselves as they really are in Christ.”

—NEIL T. ANDERSON, *Victory Over the Darkness*

Marching band was a joke at my high school. Everybody hated it, including me. The only problem was that I was in it! I would have done just about anything to get out of that laughable organization, but anyone who wanted to be in concert band (which I did) had to sign up for marching band as well. I was trapped. And on top of that, I played the tuba—not exactly an honorable instrument in the eyes of my fellow high schoolers (and, I might add, an easy target for flying objects!). I did my best not to let people know about my involvement. The end of football season was the only thing that could put me out of my misery.

Then I went to college—the University of Southern California, to be specific. And to the surprise of many, I eagerly joined the Trojan Marching Band. I loved it! What’s more, everybody at USC loved it! We were officially called “The Spirit of Troy,” and unofficially referred to as “The Greatest Marching Band in the History of the Universe” (possibly an overstatement, I realize). We were innovative, dynamic, and respected by even our most bitter rivals. It was not long before I rose to a position of leadership in this impressive organization. I was proud to be a part of it—*especially* as a tuba player!

WHY IS OUR SELF-IMAGE IMPORTANT?

In the previous chapter, we affirmed that what comes into our mind when we think about God is the most important thing about us. Now we need to realize that the way we see ourselves is the second most important thing about us. We call this our self-image or self-perception.

As my marching band experiences illustrate, the way we view ourselves determines the attitudes and actions that will characterize our lives. If we have a low self-image, as I did in my high school band experience, our lives will tend to display such things as insecurities, depression, and a lack of confidence in what we do. On the other hand, if we possess a healthy self-image, our lives will exhibit a sense of meaning and purpose, and we will be able to accomplish and enjoy just about anything.

We are not grasshoppers!

Nowhere is this issue more clearly presented than in the Bible. In the book of Numbers, chapters 13 and 14, Moses is commanded to send a group of men to explore the land which God had promised to the Israelites. Upon returning, these men gave a glowing report of the land itself, but the majority expressed an intense fear concerning the people who currently possessed it. Notice what they said: “We can’t attack those people; they are stronger than we are . . . we seemed like grasshoppers *in our own eyes*, and we looked the same to them” (13:31, 33, emphasis added).

Talk about a low self-image! Grasshoppers are flighty little bugs that no one likes. Conveying this image to the people started a first-class panic attack that almost led to complete rebellion against God. But hadn’t God promised the land to the Israelites? Yes! Joshua and Caleb, two of the explorers, remembered this, and their perception of the situation—and themselves—was quite different:

The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them (14:7-9).

ON WHAT SHOULD WE BASE OUR SELF-IMAGE?

This event in the life of God's people suggests that the way we see ourselves is largely due to how we view our circumstances. That was certainly the case in my marching band experiences. But there are other contributing factors as well.

Our families, and particularly our parents, play a major role in how our self-image forms. So do our friends. Affirmation and encouragement from those closest to us can free us to be all that God wants us to be, while their criticism, deprivation of love, or abuse can make us feel like worthless failures who will never amount to anything. Even our society in general, with its dehumanizing influences and competitive nature, can contribute negatively to our self-image. But it doesn't have to be this way.

Seeing ourselves as God sees us

To base anything on our circumstances is a dangerous thing to do, for we all know that circumstances can—and do—change. When life is going well, we feel good about ourselves, but when things seem to be falling apart, our self-image begins to crumble. And when we look to others for help and hope in the midst of our struggles, we are sometimes disappointed—even by those people who should love us the most.

What does it take, then, to establish or recover a proper understanding of who we really are? Most importantly, it takes a change in perspective, as Josh McDowell explains:

A healthy self-image is “seeing yourself as God sees you—no more and no less” . . . In other words, a healthy self-image means having a realistic view of ourselves from God’s perspective, as we are portrayed in his word. I add the phrase “no more and no less” because some people have an inflated view of themselves (pride), while others have a self-deprecating view of themselves (false humility).⁷

Romans 12:3 puts it this way: “Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment.” We need to understand how God sees us if we are to think correctly about ourselves. There are three things to consider in this regard.

First of all, because we are created in God’s image (Genesis 1:27), we are of special importance and value to him. Nothing else that God created was given this extraordinary honor of being made in his likeness and, therefore, we enjoy significance and dignity because God made us for the purpose of knowing and loving him. A proper self-image begins with this understanding.

But, secondly, because of our selfishness and rebellion, we have fallen from our privileged position and defaced God’s image. “For from within, out of your hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these things come from inside and defile you” (Jesus, in Mark 7:21-23; see anything familiar in this list?). God wants nothing to do with this aspect of who we are, and he calls us to turn from it as well (James 4:8-10). The way we see ourselves should be overwhelmingly negative until we commit our lives to Jesus Christ and experience God’s wonderful love and forgiveness. And this brings us to our third point.

As Christians, the most important basis for our self-image is our understanding of who we are *in Christ*. Again, Josh McDowell explains: “Each person has special importance as God’s creation. When God moves into a person’s life, that person’s value becomes infinite, eternal and unchanging because of the One who lives within.”⁸ “I have been crucified with Christ,” wrote

Paul, “and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). This statement is true for everyone who has received Jesus into their life.

TWO BASIC TRUTHS ABOUT US

Our self-image, then, should be based on our relationship with Jesus Christ. Just as he was supremely God’s Son (Luke 3:22) and God’s Servant (Isaiah 53:11), we are likewise to see ourselves as children of God and servants of God.

We are children of God

As was emphasized in Chapter 1, we become children of God when we commit our lives to Jesus Christ: “Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12). What a privileged relationship! Let’s consider five implications of this incredible truth.

1. *God has great love for us.* John wrote about this in a tone of utter amazement: “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” (1 John 3:1). God loves us more than we could ever imagine, for “while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son” (Romans 5:10) and given the right to become his children. This is a mind-blowing thing to comprehend! God’s love for us is infinite, unconditional, and unfailing. He is the perfect Father.
2. *God has made us members of his family.* We need to realize that when we received Christ, we were not saved in isolation from other people. Rather, we became one of God’s “dearly loved children” (Ephesians 5:1) who are to be “devoted to one another in

love” (Romans 12:10). People who claim to have committed their lives to the Lord, but who are not active members of a local expression of God’s family, the church, simply don’t understand who they are in Christ.

3. *God has made us his heirs.* Listen to what the Bible says about this: “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:16-17). This is not referring to inheritance in the strict sense of the term, for God does not die. Rather, it means that we enjoy a privileged position in God’s family—and we are as secure in that family as Jesus is, for we are “co-heirs with Christ”!

4. *God will sometimes discipline us.* “Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father?” (Hebrews 12:7).

While this may not seem very loving, it really is. Read on: “Our parents disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it” (12:10-11).

Theologian Millard Erickson has well said, “God is a heavenly father, not a heavenly grandfather. He is not indulgent . . . he sometimes finds it necessary to discipline us, just as a parent does, not because he is angry and wants to get revenge upon us, but because he wants us to become the best we can be.”⁹ What form this discipline will take is not certain, but we can be sure that any hardship we face will be used by God to make us more like him. And this brings us to our final point concerning our identity as children of God.

5. *God wants us to grow up to be like him.* I love my earthly father and want to grow up to be like him—caring, approachable, patient, a man of integrity. There is nothing more natural than this sort of emulation, and it should be all the more true concerning our heavenly Father. “Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us” (Ephesians 5:1-2). Is this your desire as one of God’s children? I hope so! Experiencing God’s great love for us in becoming a member of his family should inspire us to reflect God’s character in our lives and be identified as his possession. And this is what being a servant is all about, as we shall see.

We are servants of God

Interestingly, while the writers of the New Testament surely understood their adoption as God’s children (see Ephesians 1:5), it appears that they saw themselves primarily as God’s *servants*.

Notice the way many of their letters begin:

“Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus” (Romans 1:1).

“Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:1).

“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (James 1:1).

“Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:1).

“Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ” (Jude 1).

The Bible makes it clear that all Christians “have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God” (Romans 6:22). While we should never lose sight of our privileged position as children of God, neither should we forget our responsibility to “live as God’s slaves” (1 Peter 2:16). But this second understanding presents of couple of problems for us.

First of all, if you’re like most people, the word “servant” or “slave” doesn’t exactly sound encouraging! In his outstanding book, *Improving Your Serve*, Chuck Swindoll reveals his own struggle with this:

The mental image turned me off completely. Washing around in my head was a caricature of a pathetic creature virtually without will or purpose in life . . . bent over, crushed in spirit, lacking self-esteem, soiled, wrinkled, and weary. You know, sort of a human mule who, with a sigh, shuffles and trudges down the long rows of life. Don't ask me why, but that was my perception every time I heard the word *servant*. Candidly, the idea disgusted me.¹⁰

We need to dump such images (as Swindoll did, of course), and realize that being a servant basically means being like Jesus (who, we should remember, was no pathetic wimp!).

Humility is what being a servant of God is all about—not bondage or oppression.

Secondly, once we begin to speak of being a servant, the question arises, “Aren't Christians *free*?” The answer, of course, is “yes!,” but only in a qualified sense. When we commit our lives to Jesus Christ, we are “set free from sin” so that we can enjoy “the control of righteousness” (Romans 6:15-23). John Stott helps us understand this situation:

True freedom is, then, the exact opposite of what many people think. It is not freedom from all responsibility to God and others, in order to live for myself. That is bondage to my own self-centeredness. Instead, true freedom is freedom from my silly little self, in order to live responsibly in love for God and others.¹¹

Ironically, the only way to experience true freedom is to live as a servant of God. Let's look a little more closely at this aspect of who we are in Christ.

1. *We belong to God, our Master.* The Bible clarifies that we are not only God's children, but his possession as well. God is our Master; he owns us. “You are not your own; you were bought at a price [the death of Christ]” (1 Corinthians 6:19). And this is not something to bemoan, but rather something to rejoice in! No situation is more secure—or blessed—than to be the personal possession of the living God. We can trust him with our lives.
2. *We are to live for our Master, not ourselves.* This is the logical conclusion to our previous point. Romans 14:8-9 says, “If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we

die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.” Because Jesus is in fact our Lord or Master, we are to live for him in every area of our lives: Our family and relationships, our sexuality, our career, our finances, even our recreation. Indeed, everything about us should declare that “we belong to the Lord.”

3. *We are to obey our Master because we love him.* The attitude of a servant is one of humble service, as Jesus explains: “So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty’” (Luke 17:10). What fuels this attitude, however, is not a lingering fear of punishment but a deep love for our Master: “In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3). It should be a joy to serve God! If it is not, then we are probably doing something wrong. The writer of Psalm 119 had the right attitude: “I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free. . . . Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight” (verses 32 and 35).
4. *We are to serve others, following the example of our Master.* Practically speaking, serving God means serving other people, as Jesus demonstrated for us (John 13:1-17). We are to “serve one another humbly in love,” and “do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers” (Galatians 5:13; 6:10). In so doing, we are actually serving the Lord: “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters . . . It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (Colossians 3:23-24). And this brings us to our final point.
5. *Ultimately, we are to please our Master, not others.* Sometimes serving God results in upsetting people—even though we are not trying to do so (consider the life of Jesus).

Paul gives us the perspective we need: “Am I now trying to win human approval, or God’s approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ” (Galatians 1:10). The point is that we should always seek to do what pleases the Lord—regardless of how others react. Such is the attitude of faithful servants of God, and that’s exactly what we should be.

We should see ourselves, then, as children of God and servants of God, for this is who we are in Christ. What an incredible privilege and exciting responsibility! And we must understand that nothing can touch our identity as Christians. Of course, we can allow our self-image to fade if we neglect to remind ourselves of who we are, but our position in Christ will never change, for our “life is now hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3).

Further, when Paul prayed that we might “know the hope to which [God] has called [us], the riches of his glorious inheritance in his people” (Ephesians 1:18), it is clear that he understood our hope to be secure. Indeed, we can never lose our salvation, be kicked out of God’s family, or be disowned by our Master (Really! See John 6:37-40 and 10:27-30). Consider how Paul describes us:

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:13-14).

You can’t be any more secure than that! When we receive Christ, the Spirit of God comes into our lives to guarantee our inheritance and confirm that we belong to God. But that’s only the beginning. Let’s turn our attention now to this “promised Holy Spirit” and see what we can learn about God’s power for living.

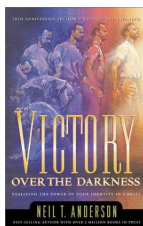
Questions for review and reflection:

1. Why is it important for Christians to have a healthy self-image?
2. If the basis of a healthy self-image is “seeing ourselves as God sees us,” how exactly does he see us? Does he view Christians and non-Christians differently? Explain.
3. What wrong ideas have you held in the past concerning how God views you? Where did those ideas come from?
4. How would you describe for someone the incredible blessings of being a child of God?
5. What does it mean to be a servant of God? Does this contradict the fact that you are God’s child? Explain.
6. Can you ever be kicked out of God’s family or disowned by the Lord? How do you know for sure?

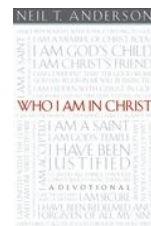
Bible passages for further study:

Ephesians 1:3-14; 1 John 2:28-3:3; Romans 6:1-23; 1 Peter 1:3-9

Helpful resources for further learning:



I have been helped the most in this area by one of my professors in seminary, Neil T. Anderson. I recommend his book, *Victory Over the Darkness: Realizing the Power of Your Identity in Christ*, and, in a more devotional format, *Who I am in Christ*.



6

Knowing God's Power For Living

“The Bible summons all Christians to accept the Spirit’s empowerment for the various tasks God has assigned us and for evangelizing the world across cultural barriers. Indeed, woe to us in a world like today’s if we try to do his work without him!”

—CRAIG S. KEENER, *Gift & Giver: The Holy Spirit for Today*

Did you ever receive a gift that required batteries in order to operate, and the batteries were not included? I remember a Christmas a number of years ago when I watched a young boy unwrap an amazing remote-control model of a “monster truck”—only to discover that he could do no more than push this sophisticated toy around by hand (making the requisite engine noises with his mouth, of course!). His father had forgotten all about the batteries needed to make the truck do all that it was designed to do. The potential was there, but the power was not, and the boy was understandably disappointed—at least until he moved on to the next gift!

In the previous chapter we learned that in Christ we are both children of God and servants of God, and our Lord fully expects us to live consistently with these truths. But can we do this? Have we been given the power needed to live the Christian life as it is described in the Bible? Or are we merely left to do the best we can, pushing ourselves around by hand, so to speak, and making it look and sound like God is at work in our lives?!

BATTERIES ARE INCLUDED!

The Bible is as clear as it can possibly be: “[God’s] divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness” (2 Peter 1:3).

You see, in Christ we have been supplied with the very “batteries” we need in order to live the way God calls us to live. Like the Energizer bunny of commercial fame (if I can get away with this analogy), we have been given the power to keep going, and going, and going, as we faithfully serve the Lord all the days of our lives. And that power does not come from us; it comes from God (see 2 Corinthians 4:7 and 12:9-10). It is no wonder, then, that Paul prayed that we might know God’s “incomparably great power for us who believe” (Ephesians 1:19).

Don't try this on your own

This leads us to a vitally important truth: It's not merely difficult to live the Christian life in our own strength—it's *impossible!* We don't have the power on our own to live for God any more than we had the power to be born of God in the first place. In both becoming a Christian and being a Christian we are entirely dependant upon the power of God in our lives.

If anyone could have lived the Christian life in their own strength, it seems like the first disciples of Jesus could have done so. Think about it. They had been with Jesus for most of his ministry, listening to everything he said, watching everything he did, and even participating in much of his work. And yet when Jesus was about to leave them for the last time, he didn't say, “Alright you guys, now go out and do your best to live your lives like I have lived mine.” Rather, he gave them the following command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about” (Acts 1:4).

Gift? What gift had Jesus spoken about? He went on to say, “For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit,” and “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you” (Acts 1:5, 8). So it was the gift of the *Spirit* that they were to wait for, and Jesus had indeed told them about this previously. Prior to his death on the cross, he had said, “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you” (John 14:16-17).

Without the gift of the Spirit, Jesus’ disciples could essentially do nothing. They were about as useful as a flashlight without batteries or a car without gasoline. With the Spirit, however, they could experience God’s personal presence and unlimited power in their lives and turn the world upside down for the glory of their Lord—which is exactly what they did! (Read the book of Acts and see for yourself).

GETTING TO KNOW THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Spirit of God was not the exclusive possession of Jesus’ first disciples. Almost immediately after receiving the gift himself, Peter declared that the Holy Spirit would be received by “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord” to be saved (Acts 2:21, 38). In fact, possession of the Spirit is what distinguishes Christians from non-Christians, as Paul made clear: “And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ” (Romans 8:9).

From “God with us” to God in us

And what exactly do we have when we possess “the Spirit of Christ”? According to the Bible, the Spirit is not some sort of impersonal force that we simply tap into (as with “the force” of *Star*

Wars fame). Nor is the gift merely a set of spiritual batteries that God installs in our lives. Rather, the Spirit is a *person*, just as Jesus is a person. He has intelligence (Isaiah 11:2; John 14:26), shows emotion (Ephesians 4:30), and has a will (1 Corinthians 12:11).

Further, the Spirit is *God*, just as Jesus is God (see, for example, Acts 5:3-4), enabling us to experience God in our lives today (remember what we said in Chapter 4 concerning God’s “threeness”—one God who exists eternally in three persons). What is the significance of this? As the birth of Jesus was announced, the child was declared to be “God with us” (Matthew 1:23). Nothing could have been more wonderful than to be with Jesus and he with us. But we don’t have our Lord’s physical presence with us today. Instead, when we received Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord, “God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts” (Galatians 4:6). In other words, the Holy Spirit is actually God *in* us—allowing us to personally and intimately experience Jesus in our lives at all times and in all places (see Romans 8:9-11 and Galatians 2:20). What an incredible blessing!

Wonder-working power

So what are some of the specific things that the Holy Spirit does as he comes to dwell in our hearts? Here are a few of his vital ministries that allow us to enjoy a dynamic relationship with the living God.

1. *The Spirit gives us new life in Christ.* To begin with, it is through the Holy Spirit that we experience salvation—the forgiveness of sins and new life that Jesus offers. Paul put it beautifully: “But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us

generously through Jesus Christ our Savior” (Titus 3:4-6; see also John 3:5-8). The Christian life is truly life in the Spirit from square one.

2. *The Spirit assures us that we belong to Christ.* Paul also wrote that “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children” (Romans 8:16). What a comforting testimony! When we are tempted to doubt our relationship with Jesus, the Spirit gives us the assurance we need (see also 1 John 3:24 and 4:13). Further, when life begins to overwhelm us and we feel like giving up, the Spirit actually prays for us! The Bible says, “the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans” (Romans 8:26). I don’t know about you, but this greatly encourages me! We can count on the Spirit’s constant encouragement throughout every day of our lives.
3. *The Spirit guides us as we seek to live for Christ.* One of the greatest promises that Jesus gave to his disciples was this: “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you” (John 16:13-14). Today, the “Spirit of truth” continues to guide followers of Christ into all truth. And while this certainly includes the truth of God’s word, Chuck Swindoll rightly asks, “If one of the Spirit’s tasks is to guide us into and disclose the truth, who says that means only the truth of Scripture? Why couldn’t it include the truth of his will? Or the truth about another person? Or the truth regarding both sides of a tough decision?”¹² The answer is that it does include these things (see, for example, Acts 8:29, 13:2 and 15:28). The Holy Spirit will guide us in every circumstance of life as we trust in him.

4. *The Spirit transforms us into the likeness of Christ.* More than anything else, the Spirit wants to make us like Jesus. As we learn to “walk by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16), God will produce in us “the fruit of the Spirit,” which is “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). And note that this “fruit” is *not* our Christian activities, such as going to church, serving on important committees, and so on. That is not to say that there is anything wrong with these involvements, but they are more along the lines of man-made decorations that are hung on a tree—not fruit that is produced from the heart of the tree. Indeed, only God, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in our hearts, can produce in us the qualities that are characteristic of our Lord. We’ll consider this further in the next chapter.
5. *The Spirit gifts us to serve in the body of Christ.* Believe it or not, as Christians, we are all ministers. By that I don’t mean that we all have to preach in church this weekend (relieved?!), but we *do* need to realize that the Holy Spirit has gifted each one of us to encourage and strengthen others in some way. The Bible says, “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good” (1 Corinthians 12:7; see verses 8-10, 21-30, Romans 12:5-8, and Ephesians 4:11 for lists of some of the gifts). Therefore, “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others,” doing so “with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 4:10-11). We’ll dig into this a bit more in Chapter 9.
6. *The Spirit enables us to testify boldly about Christ.* As with everything else in the Christian life, effectively sharing Christ with others is not the result of our own ability or strength. Paul understood this well. He wrote to the church in Corinth, “My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the

Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power (1 Corinthians 2:4-5). We must always rely on the Spirit for wisdom, courage, and results as we share the good news about Jesus Christ with other people. The earliest Christians were bold and effective witnesses precisely because "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 4:31). And this leads to the final section of this chapter.

LIVING SPIRIT-FILLED LIVES

Let me say it again: The Christian life is not a matter of doing the best we can, relying on our own resources. This would in fact be foolish and frustrating (Galatians 3:3). Rather, the key to living the Christian life is to always "be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18), which, as Billy Graham clarifies, means "to be controlled or dominated by the Spirit's presence and power."¹³ Corrie Ten Boom provides us with a helpful analogy so that we can begin to grasp what this means for our lives:

I have a glove here in my hand. The glove cannot do anything by itself, but when my hand is in it, it can do many things. True, it is not the glove, but my hand in the glove that acts. We are gloves. It is the Holy Spirit in us who is the hand, who does the job. We have to make room for the hand so that every finger is filled.¹⁴

So how do we allow the "hand" of the Holy Spirit to fill the "glove" or our lives? That is, what does it take to live Spirit-filled lives? There is no simple set of instructions to follow, as if being filled with the Spirit is actually something like installing a battery or pumping gas (or even putting on a glove, for that matter). Rather, our responsibility is to pursue and maintain a right relationship with the Holy Spirit who, we must remember, is a *person*. But how do we do that? What can we be doing to allow the Spirit to have the fullest possible control in our lives?

The answer we are seeking can be found in Galatians 5:24-25, where Paul wrote, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since

we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” Three important principles can be identified in this concise passage that provide us with the basis for being continually filled with God’s Spirit.

An acknowledgment to make

First of all, we must acknowledge that “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature [or “flesh,” as some translations have it] with its passions and desires.” In other words, we need to realize that when we began a personal relationship with Jesus, we resolutely turned our backs on sin forever. We gave our failure and rebellion to Jesus, who “bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness” (1 Peter 2:24).

Therefore, as John Stott has put it, “If we have crucified the flesh (which we have), then we must leave it securely nailed to the cross, where it deserves to be; we must not finger the nails.”¹⁵ In other words, as we are no longer under any obligation to follow the “passions and desires” of our flesh, or sinful nature (see Romans 8:12), we can and should continue to keep our backs turned on sin as we live for Christ. The penalty for our sin has been paid, and the power of sin in our lives has been broken (that is, nailed to the cross). As Paul declared, “through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2). This is wonderful news—news that we must acknowledge each and every day as we seek to be continually filled with the Spirit.

An attitude to maintain

Secondly, we must maintain an attitude of dependence upon God, for we do indeed “live by the Spirit,” not by our human efforts. The fact that we “have crucified the sinful nature with its

passions and desires” does not mean that we will automatically escape the pull of temptation and live effective and productive lives for Christ. The only way to experience victorious Christian living is to rely upon the power of the Holy Spirit in all that we do.

I learned this lesson early on in my Christian life (although, I must admit, the lesson is not always remembered). In my very first experience of regularly leading a Bible study, I knew that I was in way over my head. I had not been trained to be a leader, nor had I had much experience in leading. In short, I felt totally inadequate to do the job. But there was no one else to lead the group, and I was sure that God wanted me to do it. So I spent a lot of my time praying that God would help me prepare and that he would work through me despite my feelings of inadequacy. Consequently (and to my amazement), I saw God really change people’s lives in our group as we met together!

Now, obviously, I’m not suggesting that the key to effective ministry (or effective *anything*) is to be ignorant and unskilled. If that were the case, it would have been pointless to even have a Bible study! Since the time described above, I have completed two graduate degrees in Christian ministry, and I am deeply grateful to God for that education. But to think that my ability and training *alone* is sufficient to accomplish God’s work in my life or in the lives of others is to fall into a devastating trap. Jesus put it quite bluntly: “Apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). The point, then, is that we must ultimately depend upon the Lord in all that we do. As Paul wrote, in summing up his commitment to bring others to maturity in Christ, “To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me” (Colossians 1:29). Take note; he works hard, but he does not depend upon his own strength to get the job done. That’s the right attitude.

An action to take

Thirdly, “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” We must not only yield to the Spirit’s control as we maintain an attitude of dependence upon him; we must also head in the direction that he is leading us. But what does that involve?

To begin with, we must deal honestly and decisively with any sin that we have allowed into our lives. The Holy Spirit will never lead us into disobedience. In fact, sin grieves him deeply (Ephesians 4:30) and shuts down his power in our lives. Therefore, when we sin, we need to get back on the Spirit’s track by confessing and forsaking our sin (Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9), and renewing our desire to “keep in step with the Spirit.” There is absolutely no hope of experiencing the Spirit-filled life if we fail or refuse to reject sin in our lives.

But it’s not enough just to get back on the right track; we also need to be moving along on that track. In other words, we need to be committed to a life of joyful obedience to God. The Spirit of truth” wants nothing more than for us to walk in the truth of God’s word and God’s will each and every day of our lives. As Paul wrote to the church in Colossae, “Let the message of Christ dwell in you richly” (Colossians 3:16). This is at the heart of the Spirit-filled life.

I often illustrate this by dropping a wrapped Alka-Seltzer tablet into a glass of water. The tablet is full of energy, but it is contained in the wrapper, so it is unable to influence the water. But take the wrapper off, and the water comes alive with bubbles and is transformed into something other than ordinary water. The wrapper represents our disobedience. When we are callous about our sin, thinking it’s no big deal, the Spirit’s power is contained. He’s still there, but not able to influence our lives. But as we confess our sins and start to take God’s word seriously once again, the Spirit’s energy is released. Now he has room to work, and we are transformed!

Being continually filled with God's Spirit is exactly how the Christian life is to be lived. As we acknowledge that we belong to Christ and have crucified the sinful nature, maintain an attitude of dependence upon the Spirit each day, and actively obey him as he guides us into all truth, we will experience the incredible power of God in our lives as the Spirit works in and through us to bring glory to Jesus Christ. Why would we want to settle for anything less?!

I'll close with Paul's wonderful prayer of encouragement for the believers in Rome: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13). Amen!

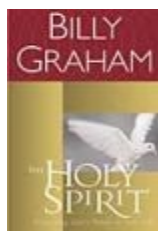
Questions for review and reflection:

1. How would you explain the Holy Spirit to someone who is unfamiliar with him?
2. When does a person receive the Spirit into his or her life? How do we know that he has been received?
3. In what specific ways has the Holy Spirit been working in your life? What about in the life of your church?
4. How would you explain to someone what it means to be filled with the Spirit? What does a Spirit-filled Christian look like?
5. Why do we often fail to experience the Spirit-filled life?
6. How does the Alka-Seltzer tablet illustration help you to understand the dynamics of the Spirit-filled life? Can you think of another illustration?

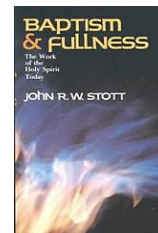
Bible passages for further study:

John 16:5-15; Romans 8:1-17; Galatians 5:16-25; 1 Corinthians 2 and 12

Helpful resources for further learning:



My favorite introductions to the ministry of the Holy Spirit are both highly readable and written by deeply respected leaders: Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit: Activating God's Power in Your Life*, and the brief work by John Stott, *Baptism & Fullness: The Work of the Holy Spirit Today*.



Endnotes for Part 2

¹ J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*. 20th Anniversary Edition (InterVarsity Press, 1993) 19.

² John MacArthur, Jr., *The Ultimate Priority* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983) 46.

³ John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1986) 329.

⁴ R. L. Saucy, "God, Doctrine of" in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd Edition, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001) 502.

⁵ Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God Even When Life Hurts* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1988) 140.

⁶ R. C. Sproul in *Tabletalk*, vol. 1, no. 3 (June 1987) 3. Sproul has written a classic on *The Holiness of God* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1998). I recommend it highly.

⁷ Josh McDowell, *His Image, My Image* (San Bernardino: Here's Life Publishers, 1984) 31.

⁸ Ibid. 12-13.

⁹ Millard Erickson, *Does It Matter What I Believe?* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992) 38.

¹⁰ Charles R. Swindoll, *Improving Your Serve* (Waco: Word Books, 1981) 15.

¹¹ John R. W. Stott, *The Contemporary Christian* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992) 55.

¹² Charles R. Swindoll, *Flying Closer to the Flame: A Passion for the Holy Spirit* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993) 97.

¹³ Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit: Activating God's Power in Your Life* (Waco: Word Books, 1978) 140-41.

¹⁴ Quoted in *Christianity Today* (January 10, 1994) 34.

¹⁵ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Galatians* (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 1968) 154.