

# FLYING CLOSER TO THE FLAME

## STUDY ONE

### Let's Get Reacquainted with the Spirit

#### *Selected Scriptures*

*This series explores the real side of the Spirit of God and some of the unspoken dimensions of His work—things that will alter our course in a sin-cursed world.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**I**N Christian art, the Holy Spirit is represented as a flame. The symbol recalls the day of Pentecost when “what looked like flames or tongues of fire” settled on the believers in the upper room and filled them with power (Acts 2:3).

It's a fitting image, because, like flames in a furnace that forge iron into steel, the Spirit has power to transform our lives. Flames also give heat and light—like those in a crackling campfire that warm us on a cold night and protect us from predators. So also, the Spirit reassures us with His presence and keeps us safe from the evil one.

And yet, many believers feel unsure and uninformed about the Holy Spirit. Bible lessons on the Trinity tend to spotlight the Father and the Son and leave the Spirit in the shadows. Also, we intuitively know how to relate to the heavenly Father because we have earthly fathers, and we identify with the Son who lived among us. But how do we relate to a flame? Even His name, *Holy Spirit*, conveys the idea of a wispy phantom who is hard to grasp or get close to.

This *Searching the Scriptures* series is designed to clear the fog of mystery surrounding the Holy Spirit and help you know Him personally, even intimately. For too long, He has been consigned to the pages of theological textbooks, when His true place is in the everyday, dishes-and-laundry part of our lives. It's time to draw near to the Spirit, to invite the flame of His empowering presence to warm our hearts, and to learn to walk with Him as our closest companion and most trusted spiritual guide.



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## Let's Get Reacquainted with the Spirit

### *Selected Scriptures*



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Ready to take your first step? As you open the Word, invite the Holy Spirit to illumine your heart with His truth. You may wish to pray as Pastor Chuck Swindoll prays before he studies the Word: "I often pray, 'Lord, speak to me. Help me understand what this passage is saying. I am listening. I am sensitive to Your truth. Lead me into it.'"<sup>1</sup> Write your prayer below if you wish.



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

*Searching the Scriptures* is a four-step Bible study method. In the observation phase, we look at what the biblical passage says. The next phase is interpretation, in which we seek to understand the meaning the author intended for his audience. Correlation draws on similar passages to understand our passage within the broader biblical context. Finally, application answers the practical question, "How should I respond to the truth I learned?"

For helpful instruction from Pastor Chuck Swindoll on this method, consult the Insight for Living Ministries online instructional web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)." There, you can also follow the [link to purchase a copy](#) of Pastor Chuck's book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*.



### Observation: Discovering the Holy Spirit's Significance

Scripture study begins by reading the passages carefully and writing down what you see. Take your time. Notice who is speaking and the setting. View the action, commands, statements, and events as logical building blocks that form a foundation upon which to build your interpretation.





## Let's Get Reacquainted with the Spirit

### *Selected Scriptures*

#### His Permanent Presence with Us—John 14:1–17

On the night before His crucifixion (the *time*) in the upper room (the *place*), Jesus told His disciples He would be leaving them soon (the *message*). The thought of losing their Master must have unsettled the disciples, who had never left His side. But the Lord calmed their nerves with what promises in [John 14:1–3](#)?

Jesus reassured them He was their direct link to the Father—“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me” (John 14:6)—because He was “in the Father” and the Father was in Him (14:11).

According to [14:16–17](#), what did Jesus say He would ask the Father to give His followers in His absence? Observe these verses closely and write down what you notice about the name of the Holy Spirit and Jesus’ promises regarding the Spirit as a gift to His followers, including us.

*We will never know a moment in our lives when we don't have the Spirit. We come to know Christ, and part of that marvelous spiritual package is the presence of the Holy Spirit.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll





## Let's Get Reacquainted with the Spirit

### *Selected Scriptures*

#### His Unparalleled Dynamic among Us—Acts 1:4–8

After His death and resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples in His resurrected body and “talked to them about the Kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). Just before ascending into heaven, Jesus gave them what final instructions, according to [Acts 1:4–8](#)?

*The power that was at creation, the power that was there when the Red Sea opened, the power that was evidenced in the lives of the prophets, the power that brought Christ back from the dead—that power will be ours! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



#### **Interpretation: The Dynamic Nature of the Holy Spirit's Power**

In the interpretation phase, let's seek to understand the meaning of the Greek word for “power” in [Acts 1:8](#), *dunamis*. It wasn't physical strength to break iron bars or political control to bend others' wills. Rome ruled by flexing that kind of power. No, Jesus promised *dunamis*, from which is derived the English word, *dynamic*.

If not physical or political, what is the nature of the power Jesus promised? Why is this kind of “dynamic” essential for Jesus' followers to carry on His ministry? Dig into your Bible study resources to discover the meaning of *dunamis* within the context of Acts 1:8. You can use a commentary on Acts or [The Swindoll Study Bible](#). For an online resource, consult [Constable's Notes](#) at [netbible.org](#).





## Let's Get Reacquainted with the Spirit

### *Selected Scriptures*

The divine agent of this power is the Holy Spirit. We speak and act in His *dunamis*, not our own. Why does the Spirit enable us, according to [Acts 1:8](#); [4:31](#) and [2 Corinthians 4:5–7](#)?

Summarize in a sentence or two what you've learned about the Spirit's power.

*The power was the unparalleled aid which the Holy Spirit granted. Jesus' followers had ability beyond their own natural-born strength, and that is the power you have been given.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



### Correlation: Relying on the Spirit's Power

In correlation, we look for supportive passages to enhance our understanding. Brilliant and capable, the apostle Paul could have leaned on his own intellect and skill in his ministry. Instead, what did Paul say he depended on, according to [1 Corinthians 2:1–5](#)? What were his reasons for not relying on his own strength?





## Let's Get Reacquainted with the Spirit

### *Selected Scriptures*

In the next *Searching the Scriptures* study, we'll examine other examples of the Spirit's dynamic. We'll see the Spirit energizing the witness of early Christians, sustaining them under persecution, and emboldening them to face accusers unafraid. But this otherworldly dynamic isn't confined to the past; it's just as active in us today . . . if we choose to fly closer to the flame.

*The Spirit's power gives us a sense of invincibility and confidence, regardless of the odds against us. It's the kind of dynamic we need in a world like ours. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### **Application: Removing the Resistance between Us and the Spirit**

To come closer to the Spirit, we may need to get past a few barriers. The first barrier is *the barrier of the fearful unknown*. Have you felt fearful about knowing the Holy Spirit more intimately? If so, what are your fears?

Another barrier may be *the wall of traditional limitations*. We may need to challenge some of the assumptions our religious tradition has taught us about the Holy Spirit. What messages about the Spirit have shaped your thinking and perhaps led you to keep the Spirit at a distance?





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In addition, we may need to overcome *the obstacle of personal excuses*. It may seem safer to discuss the Holy Spirit in theological terms than to risk getting to know Him intimately. We can always find excuses for not making ourselves vulnerable. What could be holding you back from a closer walk with the Spirit?

What do you want to see happen in your life through your biblical study of the Holy Spirit?

So far, we've learned from Scripture that the Holy Spirit dwells in us, never leaves us, and leads us into all truth (John 14:16–17). Not only does the Spirit *indwell* us, He also *enables* us to carry on Christ's ministry as witnesses (Acts 1:8).

We'll build in these truths in coming studies, but before going any further, we urge you to make them personal. Read the previous paragraph again replacing "us" with "me." Now, slip these truths in your heart, and rehearse them in your mind through the day. Your walk with the Spirit is just getting started.





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### *Selected Scriptures*



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You for giving me such a wonderful gift. Nothing on this earth compares to the indwelling and enabling presence of the Holy Spirit. Give me the courage to grow closer to Him and know Him as my dearest companion on my path through life. Fill my heart with the joy of walking in step every day with the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.*

### ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 128.





# FLYING CLOSER TO THE FLAME

## STUDY TWO

### The Main Agenda of God's Spirit: Transformation

#### *Selected Scriptures*

*The same transforming power that changed the apostles is still available to God's people. What a wonderful hope!*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

ON the night of His betrayal and arrest, Jesus told His disciples that He would leave them soon. His words set off a tidal wave of emotion that washed over them.

- They were deeply *troubled* (John 14:1).
- They were *confused* (14:5; 16:17–18).
- They felt *abandoned* (14:18).
- They felt *afraid* (14:27).

The disciples exhibited ordinary human frailties. They vacillated between courage and cowardice, faith and doubt. In the upper room, they vowed they would die with Jesus (Matthew 26:35), but when Jesus was arrested in the garden, they all fled (26:56). Even after Jesus' resurrection, they struggled to wrap their minds around God's bigger plan: "Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?" (Acts 1:6).



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## The Main Agenda of God's Spirit: Transformation

### *Selected Scriptures*

Intimidated, insecure, and bewildered—such was the condition of the disciples *before* Pentecost. *After* Pentecost, however, these frightened sheep suddenly transformed into lionhearted witnesses! The coming of the Holy Spirit marked a dramatic change in the disciples' lives. Let's draw from what happened a bold, post-Pentecost picture of Jesus' Spirit-filled followers—a picture that includes all believers who live in the power of the Spirit.



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

The before-and-after portraits of the early disciples illustrate what can transpire when we yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit's control. Ask the Lord to reveal the areas in your life that need His transforming touch as you open His Word.

*Father, bring to life the events of Pentecost as if I were there when Your Spirit filled the believers on the day the church was born. Transform my life with Your power as You see fit. Stir in me a deeper love for You and a Spirit-empowered courage to boldly proclaim Christ in my world. In His name, amen.*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Let's pick up the action on the day of Pentecost. Pentecost was a Jewish festival that occurred fifty days after Passover. For Pentecost, pilgrims traveled to Jerusalem to present to God the first fruit of their harvest. This year, a new kind of spiritual harvest would be offered to the Lord: the believers who represented the first fruit of Christ's Spirit-empowered church!



### Observation: A Survey of Personal Transformation

A helpful practice in the observation phase of *Searching the Scriptures* is to put yourself in the scene. Imagine joining the believers who, for weeks, had avoided the authorities and kept to themselves for fear of being arrested. In the large upper room, shafts of light filtered through open windows as people milled around the room talking in hushed voices. Then, *suddenly* . . .





## The Main Agenda of God's Spirit: Transformation

### *Selected Scriptures*

#### Human Frailties Transformed—Acts 2:1–12; 3:1–10

If you had been present, what would you have heard, seen, and experienced, according to Luke's account in [Acts 2:1–4](#)?

The sound was like the fury of a hurricane, only with no wind, and the fiery appearance of the Holy Spirit was like the fire of God settling on the ancient tabernacle (Exodus 40:38), only on each individual. What supernatural ability did the Spirit give the believers? What do you observe about the Jews outside the room who heard the noise—their ethnicities and how they responded in [Acts 2:5–12](#)?

Later, Peter and John displayed another Spirit-empowered ability at the temple. What were they able to do in Christ's name, according to [3:1–10](#)?





## The Main Agenda of God's Spirit: Transformation

### *Selected Scriptures*

Summarize the contrast you see in the disciples' *abilities* before and after the Spirit came upon them?

*If we had observed them two days before this event, we would have seen one kind of people.  
Two days after this event, we would have wondered if they were the same individuals.  
Absolutely transformed! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

### **Fearful Reluctance Transformed—Acts 2:36–41; 4:13**

All at once, the Spirit-empowered believers burst out of their safe enclave, boldly declaring the wonderful things God had done (Acts 2:10). According to [Acts 2:36–41](#), what boldness do you observe in Peter—the same man who only weeks earlier denied Jesus with a curse?

The apostles' stunning transformation wasn't lost on the Jewish authorities. What did they see in Peter and John, according to [4:13](#)?





## The Main Agenda of God's Spirit: Transformation

### *Selected Scriptures*

Summarize the contrast you see in the disciples' *confidence* before and after the Spirit came upon them.

*These were the same disciples who only days before were reluctant to talk to anyone. Now they were out in the streets boldly proclaiming Jesus Christ without fear.*

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

### Feelings of Intimidation Transformed—Acts 4:1–12; 5:27–32

How did the priests and religious authorities attempt to intimidate Peter and John to stop preaching, according to [Acts 4:1–7](#)?

What qualities did Peter display in [Acts 4:8–12](#)? Don't miss the source of Peter's calm boldness in 4:8.





## The Main Agenda of God's Spirit: Transformation

### *Selected Scriptures*

Released with a warning, the apostles went right on preaching “the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31) and were arrested again. The high priest shook his finger at them: “We gave you strict orders never again to teach in [Jesus’] name!” (5:28). Standing tall and unintimidated, what did Peter say in response in 5:29–32? Notice the roles of all three members of the Trinity.

Summarize the contrast you see in the disciples’ *sense of invincibility* before and after the Spirit came upon them.

*Peter and John had courage they never had before. Why? The intimate Spirit of God had come into their lives and freed them from their fears. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

### Feelings of Abandonment Transformed—Acts 5:40–42

Although the disciples may have felt like orphans when Jesus left them, the Holy Spirit transformed their feelings of abandonment into rock-solid security in the face of persecution. What emotions did Peter and John display in Acts 5:40–42?





## The Main Agenda of God's Spirit: Transformation

### *Selected Scriptures*

Summarize the contrast you see in the disciples' *perseverance* before and after the Spirit came upon them.

*What an honor to bear in our bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### **Interpretation: The Baptism and Filling of the Spirit**

Two key words in the New Testament describe the actions of the Holy Spirit: *baptize* and *fill*. Jesus had promised the disciples, “In just a few days you will be *baptized* with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5, emphasis added). In addition, when the Spirit came, “Everyone present was *filled* with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability” (2:4, emphasis added). The Spirit performed both functions on the day of Pentecost. Let's look closer at what these words mean.

Paul helps us interpret the first word. How did Paul describe the baptism by the Holy Spirit in [1 Corinthians 12:13](#)? Who is baptized by the Spirit? Into what are they baptized? What is the result?

As a result of the baptism by the Holy Spirit, we all have been “joined with Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:3), and we possess spiritual gifts from the Spirit, who determines “which gift each person should have” (1 Corinthians 12:11).





## The Main Agenda of God's Spirit: Transformation

### *Selected Scriptures*

The Holy Spirit also *fills* believers to enable them for certain tasks. According to [Acts 4:8–10, 31; 13:9–11, 49–52](#), what tasks did the Spirit enable?

We're never commanded in Scripture to be baptized by the Spirit, but we are commanded to "be filled" (Ephesians 5:18). In the fourth study of this series, we'll take a deeper look at the filling of the Spirit, and specifically, how we can be filled on a daily basis. For now, write down what you understand baptism and filling of the Spirit to mean. Don't forget to consult your Bible study resources, or, for a free online resource, check out [Constable's Notes](#) at [netbible.org](#).



### **Correlation: Spirit of Power**

Through their baptism and filling, the apostles and early Christians did things in the power of the Spirit they could never have done in their own strength. The Holy Spirit had transformed their human frailties into supernatural abilities, their fearful reluctance into bold confidence, their posture of intimidation into a sense of invincibility, and their feelings of abandonment into joyful perseverance.





## The Main Agenda of God's Spirit: Transformation

### *Selected Scriptures*

Decades later, according to [2 Timothy 1:6–8](#), what did Paul say to encourage Timothy—who represented the next generation of believers?

Paul's challenge echoes through time to our generation as well. The same transforming power is still available to God's people today!



### Application: Probing Questions

Through the lens of Scripture, we saw up close the remarkable transformation of the early Christians. The Spirit's flame that ignited the hearts of the believers would spread through the whole world, and He even came to live in you the moment you placed your faith in Jesus. How have you seen His transformative power in your life?

Review the four areas in which the early believers experienced transformation—namely, regarding their *abilities*, *confidence*, *sense of invincibility*, and *perseverance*. Which area would you like the Spirit to strengthen and, specifically, for what purpose?





## The Main Agenda of God's Spirit: Transformation

### *Selected Scriptures*

As you close this study, ask the Lord to reveal your own before-and-after portrait. He lives in you, and He can fill you with His power to boldly transform your fear into active, courageous faith.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, may the Holy Spirit make a difference in me so that I might experience transformation like the early Christians experienced. Give me the courage to step out in faith, speak up with confidence, and depend on You for the results. In Jesus' name, amen.*





## FLYING CLOSER TO THE FLAME

### STUDY THREE

## My Sin . . . and “The Things of the Spirit”

*Romans 6–8; Galatians 5:13–23*

*Surely, the Holy Spirit was not given just for people in biblical days. Because the Spirit dwells within us, we can know power that overcomes sin and gets us through life.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

So far, we’ve witnessed the Holy Spirit’s flame burn brightly in the lives of the apostles and early Christians. When the Spirit settled on them as tongues of fire, He enabled their tongues to proclaim the good news of Christ in many languages. He broke the chains of fear that held them behind closed doors and emboldened them as witnesses, unintimidated and willing to die for their Savior. But those days are gone, right?

According to Pastor Chuck Swindoll, the Holy Spirit’s flame still burns bright in our lives.

He longs to empower you and me with His dynamic presence. He is ready and able to change our attitudes, warm our hearts, show us how and where to walk, comfort us in our struggles, strengthen us in the weak and fragile places of our lives, and literally revolutionize our pilgrimage from this planet to paradise. . . .

Never forget this: the Holy Spirit is interested in transforming us from the inside out.<sup>1</sup>



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### My Sin . . . and “The Things of the Spirit”

*Romans 6–8; Galatians 5:13–23*

In this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we flip the pages of history forward to our day. What chains will the Holy Spirit’s power break in your life? How will He revolutionize your “pilgrimage from this planet to paradise”?



#### PREPARE YOUR HEART

One reason God gave us the Holy Spirit was “to fill our hearts with his love” (Romans 5:5). As you open God’s Word, warm your heart by the fire of God’s love and pray for insight into His message for you.

*Father, Your Word is “my joy and my heart’s delight” (Jeremiah 15:16). Draw me into the joy of Your presence as I learn how to walk closer to You with authentic and pure devotion in the power of the Spirit. In Jesus’ name, amen.*



#### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

At odds with the Spirit is our flesh—our natural inclination toward sin. Paul wrote extensively about sin in the opening chapters of Romans, concluding that “everyone has sinned” (Romans 3:23), and “the wages of sin is death” (6:23). God, however, “freed us from the penalty for our sins” by offering Jesus as our atoning sacrifice (3:24–25). He “makes sinners right in his sight when they believe in Jesus” (3:26). This is good news . . . but there’s more!

Because God loves us, He not only *delivers* us from the penalty of sin but also *frees* us from our habits of sin—habits that don’t surrender without a fight. In Romans 6–8 and Galatians 5, Paul wrote like a battlefield correspondent, reporting on the war that wages in our soul between our flesh and God’s Spirit. Paul delivered good news and bad news but assured us that, in the end, we have victory in the power of the Spirit.





My Sin . . . and “The Things of the Spirit”

Romans 6–8; Galatians 5:13–23



Observation: Admitting the Struggle, Claiming the Victory

A chart is a helpful tool to record observations. Read the verses in the chart below closely and reflectively. Write down any similarities or contrasts you observe about our freedom in Christ, ongoing struggles with sin, and hope in the Spirit.

Sin No Longer Has Power Over Us	
In the following verses, Paul rang a liberty bell. What good news do these verses sound out to Christians?	
<i>Romans 6:6–7, 12–14</i>	<i>Galatians 5:1, 13</i>

*We have been emancipated! We have been freed from slavery to sin. Sin no longer has power over us. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

Sin Is Still Present Within Us	
While sin is a vanquished foe, it still is a present enemy. What do you observe about the conflict between the Spirit and the part of our humanity that is drawn to sin? In Greek, Paul labeled this part, <i>sarx</i> —which the New Living Translation translates as the “old nature” or “sinful nature” and the New American Standard Bible translates as the “flesh.”	
<i>Romans 7:5, 18–20</i>	<i>Galatians 5:17, 19–21</i>





# My Sin . . . and “The Things of the Spirit”

Romans 6–8; Galatians 5:13–23

*Sin may no longer have power over us, but it is still present within us. There is a part of our being, our inner person, that still desires to live disobediently. We cannot get away from the fact that we carry around the carnal desires of the flesh. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

The Holy Spirit Provides a New Dimension of Living	
Now that we have the Spirit, we can submit our will to God in such a way that we desire the things of the Spirit rather than the things of the flesh. When we make that choice, we live in a new spiritual dimension. We “walk by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16 NASB) as the Spirit empowers us to live free from sin. What do these verses teach about the Spirit-controlled life versus the flesh-controlled life?	
Romans 8:9–11	Galatians 5:16, 22–25

*“Walk by the Spirit.” Now, that is the secret. This is not talking about believing that Christ died for your sins. That’s conversion. Now that you’re a believer, do you walk by the Spirit? —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



## Interpretation: Understanding the “Things That Please the Spirit”

How do we win the battle of our desires? By redirecting our desires from the things of the flesh to “the things that please the Spirit” (Romans 8:5). These “things” appear in Romans 8 as the Spirit’s beautiful blessings—which are such a contrast to the ugliness of sin.

Note the blessings of the Spirit in the following verses. Write down your interpretation of each item *along with its spiritual benefit for you personally*. To help discern the meaning, read the verses in three Bible versions, including the Amplified Bible. Feel free to use your Bible study resources to help you discover the meaning.





# FLYING CLOSER TO THE FLAME

## STUDY THREE

# SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

## STUDY

### My Sin . . . and “The Things of the Spirit”

*Romans 6–8; Galatians 5:13–23*

What does “life and peace” mean for you—*Romans 8:6*?

What does “not . . . fearful slaves. Instead . . . adopted” mean for you—*Romans 8:15*?

What does “heirs of God’s glory” mean for you—*Romans 8:16–17*?

What does the “Holy Spirit prays for us” and “pleads for us” mean for you—*Romans 8:26–27*?



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## My Sin . . . and “The Things of the Spirit”

*Romans 6–8; Galatians 5:13–23*

Life, peace, release from fear, security as God’s children, assurance about our future, assistance in prayer, awareness of God’s will—such blessings! In addition are the *fruit of the Spirit*: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22–23). Compare these virtues produced by the Spirit with Paul’s list of fleshly vices in *Galatians 5:19–21*. What impression did Paul intend to leave for his readers with these two contrasting lists?

When viewed side-by-side, the things of the Spirit appeal to us far more than the things of the flesh, don’t they? Our souls genuinely crave life, assurance, security, love, joy, peace . . . *every* blessing the Spirit offers! Whether or not we experience these things depends on how we set our mind—“the *mind set on the Spirit* is life and peace” (Romans 8:6 NASB, emphasis added). Let’s dig deeper into this concept in other passages.



### Correlation: Setting Our Minds on the Things of the Spirit

What do the following verses teach about the crucial role our mind plays in determining our behavior?

*Romans 12:2*





## My Sin . . . and “The Things of the Spirit”

*Romans 6–8; Galatians 5:13–23*

*Philippians 4:8–9*

*Colossians 3:2–3*

The Spirit unleashes His transforming power when we set our minds on the things of the Spirit. He peels the veneer off sin so we can see sin for what it is—ugly, destructive, and deadly distortions of all that’s good. He helps us build new, life-giving habits to replace the old habits of sin. So what should you set your mind on today?



### Application: Thrilling Thoughts to Consider

Begin your day with this thought: *I choose to desire what God desires—the things of the Spirit not the things of the flesh.* It’s a simple first step, but an important one. Your goal isn’t to eliminate desires but to surrender them to God and focus them on the things of the Spirit—the spiritual blessings from the Father who loves you. Can you take that step right now?





### My Sin . . . and “The Things of the Spirit”

*Romans 6–8; Galatians 5:13–23*

The next thought is this: *I yield control to the Spirit who lives in me.* Only the Spirit can empower the things of the Spirit. So, invite Him to take control when you’re trying to be patient in a traffic jam or trying to find peace in a crisis or trying to love an enemy. Can you take this step?

These are just the initial steps in walking by the Spirit and living in a new spiritual dimension. But there’s more to learn. What does the filling of the Spirit mean? How do we experience His filling daily? How can His filling change our lives? In the next *Searching the Scriptures* study, we’ll dig into these concepts in Ephesians 5:15–21.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, when I feel the battle waging in my mind between my flesh and the Spirit, help me to set my desires on You and Your will. Clear my head of wrong thinking about sin. It’s not what it appears to be; rather, it is the source of all pain and sorrow in life. Help me to desire only the things of the Spirit and to live in submission to Your will. In Jesus’ name, amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Embraced by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 9.





## FLYING CLOSER TO THE FLAME

### STUDY FOUR

## Is the Spirit's Filling That Big a Deal?

*1 Corinthians 6:19–20; Ephesians 5:15–21*

*Just as we came to Christ by faith, we continue to walk by faith as we are fueled, energized, and empowered by the person of the Holy Spirit.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

CHRISTIANS live in two dimensions: physical and spiritual. In the physical world, we experience life through our senses. We smell a bouquet of fresh flowers, warm our hands over a campfire, or marvel at the sunlight dancing on the dewdrops in a lush meadow.

On the spiritual plane, we pray to our heavenly Father whom we can't see but who we know is always with us. Even our body is not just flesh and bone but also a "temple of the Holy Spirit,"—the Holy Spirit who, Paul writes, "lives in you and was given to you by God" (1 Corinthians 6:19).

Two dimensions. Paul referred to them as "the things which are seen" and "the things which are not seen" (2 Corinthians 4:18 NASB). Because they exist together, a walk in the woods can also be a walk in the Spirit. As we take in the sights, sounds, and smells of creation's wonders, a melody of praise reverberates through our inner cathedral. Every day can be a walk in the Spirit whenever we set our minds "on the things above" (Colossians 3:2 NASB)—that is, live on a spiritual plane in a physical world.

The *filling* of the Spirit refers to the power that fuels our walk in the Spirit. When we invite the Spirit to fill us, He enables us in ways that surpass our own abilities. Filling is what happens when the Spirit takes control and produces God's work in us and through us. The filling of the Spirit is a big deal. In fact, it's the biggest deal!



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## Is the Spirit's Filling That Big a Deal?

*1 Corinthians 6:19–20; Ephesians 5:15–21*



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Pause a moment to consider that the one who created and controls the universe indwells *your* body as His sacred sanctuary. Amazing! Nothing could be more intimate in your relationship with the Holy Spirit than the reality that He lives in you. Before you open the Word, give thanks and pray for guidance.



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Paul taught about the filling of the Spirit in Ephesians 5. The first three chapters of his letter to the Ephesian church focused on how God rescued us from sin and gave us a new identity as His adopted children. When we believed in Christ, God sealed us as His own “by giving [us] the Holy Spirit”—God’s “guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised” (Ephesians 1:13, 14).

Chapters four through six of Ephesians focus on how to live as Christians. Prior to salvation, we were dead in sin; but God, with His resurrection power, raised us to new life *in Christ* (2:5). Now, we need God’s power to live *like Christ*. We need to be filled with the Spirit—which is Paul’s pinnacle point in Ephesians 5.

*We must have the fuel of the Holy Spirit to empower us, to energize us, and to move us from where we are to where we want to be. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*





## Is the Spirit's Filling That Big a Deal?

*1 Corinthians 6:19–20; Ephesians 5:15–21*



### Observation: Be Filled with the Spirit

A helpful analogy regarding the Spirit's role in our lives is driving a car. We know where God wants us to go spiritually (to become like Christ), and we have gas in the tank (the indwelling Spirit), but we still must start the engine for the car to move. What must we do and not do to engage the Spirit's power, according to Paul in *Ephesians 5:18*?

We'll dig deeper into the contrast between drunkenness and the filling of the Spirit in the interpretation phase. For now, observe four evidences of the Holy Spirit's influence mentioned in *5:19–21*.

5:19: \_\_\_\_\_

5:19: \_\_\_\_\_

5:20: \_\_\_\_\_

5:21: \_\_\_\_\_

Notice that the Spirit's filling overflows into *praise to God* and *service to others*. The more we are "filled" with the Spirit, the more our hearts sing in grateful worship (Ephesians 5:19–20) and the more our hands reach out in submissive acts of love (5:21).

Paul's teaching on the filling of the Spirit links back to the beginning of chapter 5. What overarching commands from *5:1–2* does the filling of the Spirit help us obey?





## Is the Spirit's Filling That Big a Deal?

1 Corinthians 6:19–20; Ephesians 5:15–21



### Interpretation: The Meaning of “Be Filled with the Holy Spirit”

Paul contrasted “be filled with the Holy Spirit” with “don’t be drunk with wine” (Ephesians 5:18). Both conditions refer to control or influence—but the instrument of control could not be more opposite, along with the effects. In the following chart, we’ve listed some negative characteristics of drunkenness. Fill in the right column with what you think might be the contrasting positive attributes of being Spirit-filled.

Drunkenness	Being Filled with the Spirit
Out of control	
Deadened senses	
Confused thinking	
Shameful behavior	
Ruined life	

How are we filled by the Spirit? In one sense, we already are filled. The Holy Spirit indwells all believers, and our spiritual tank never needs refilling! Paul had in mind another sense in his command, *be filled*, which emerges as we examine under the grammatical microscope the Greek word, *pleroō*.

1. *Command*: The verb is an imperative, which means that filling is necessary for our obedience to Christ and spiritual growth.
2. *Plural*: Paul applied his command to *all* believers, not just a select few for special tasks. Imagine a whole community of believers filled with the Spirit!
3. *Present tense*: The verb tense implies continuous action. While the Spirit’s baptism is a one-time, unretractable event, the Spirit’s filling is ongoing and must be cultivated.
4. *Passive voice*: We can’t fill ourselves. We call upon God to fill us with His Spirit. Only the Spirit can enable us to be like Christ and worship with pure hearts.





## Is the Spirit's Filling That Big a Deal?

*1 Corinthians 6:19–20; Ephesians 5:15–21*

Summarize these concepts in your own words. What key characteristics of being filled with the Spirit stand out to you?

How do you know when the Spirit is filling you?

*We regularly pray, “Fill me, Lord, for this moment. I want to be used. I want to be available. I make myself dependent on You.” It’s like walking. It’s just part of your life.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



### Correlation: Questions and Answers

Our study may be prompting a couple of questions. First, *why is Spirit-filling necessary?* An answer lies in the message the Lord gave the prophet Ezekiel. What can God’s people do in the power of the Spirit that they couldn’t do before the Spirit came at Pentecost, according to Ezekiel’s prophecy in [Ezekiel 36:26–27](#)?





## Is the Spirit's Filling That Big a Deal?

*1 Corinthians 6:19–20; Ephesians 5:15–21*

In addition, apart from the Spirit's power, there would be no hope of overcoming our spiritual enemies. What three enemies does the Spirit empower us against in these verses: *Romans 8:12–14*; *Ephesians 6:11–18*; and *1 John 5:5–8*?

Second, *can we be filled with the Spirit at times and not filled at other times?* Most of the Spirit's ministries can't be undone. He seals us (*Ephesians 1:13 NASB*), regenerates us (*Titus 3:5 NASB*), gives us spiritual gifts (*1 Corinthians 12:4–7*), baptizes us into Christ's body (*12:13*), and dwells in us (*3:16 NASB*). But what did Paul say in *Romans 8:6–8* and *Ephesians 4:30–31* can hinder the Spirit's flow of power?

Thankfully, confession of sin and repentance reconnect us to our spiritual power source, and, by yielding to the Spirit's control and acting in obedience, we sense the Spirit's filling once again.



### Application: A Prayerful Mind-set

The key to starting the “engine” and engaging the power of the Spirit is a mind-set of prayer. Paul said it simply, “Pray without ceasing” (*1 Thessalonians 5:17 NASB*)—which means keep a conversation with God going throughout your day, from your first wakeful thoughts in the morning to your final thoughts before drifting asleep.





## Is the Spirit's Filling That Big a Deal?

*1 Corinthians 6:19–20; Ephesians 5:15–21*

In his book, *Embraced by the Spirit*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll offers his morning prayer as a model:

“This is your day, Lord. I want to be at Your disposal. I have no idea what these next twenty-four hours will contain. But before I sip my first cup of coffee, and even before I get dressed, I want You to know that from this moment on throughout this day, I’m Yours, Lord. Help me to lean on You, to draw strength from You, and to have You fill my mind and my thoughts. Take control of my senses so that I am literally filled with Your presence and empowered with Your energy. I want to be Your tool, Your vessel today. I can’t make it happen. And so I’m saying, Lord, fill me with Your Spirit today.”<sup>1</sup>

In the space below, compose your own daily prayer asking for the Spirit’s filling.

Now slip these thoughts in your mental pocket and carry them with you. Keep reminding yourself of your need for the Spirit’s filling and power . . . when you step into a meeting at work, when you search for wise words for your children, when you start a homework assignment, when you feel tempted to sin, when you consider an important decision—at every moment of your day.

And then, watch the Spirit work in you and through you as you take each step in the power and filling of the Spirit.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, focus my thoughts on You as I drive the freeways, as I meet with people, do chores, eat meals, and as I go about my day. Take control of my senses so I am filled with Your presence and power. Fill me, Lord, with Your Spirit as I face whatever I face today. In Jesus’ name, amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Embraced by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 77.





# FLYING CLOSER TO THE FLAME

## STUDY FIVE

### The Spirit Who Surprises

*1 Corinthians 2:1–13*

*The Spirit of God is a reservoir of knowledge and truth. With comfort and compassion, He takes the things of God and reveals them to us.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

THE Holy Spirit usually ministers behind the scenes, operating in subtle ways rather than making His presence obvious. So slight is His touch and faint His whisper that we often are surprised to realize, upon later reflection, that the Holy Spirit was at work, giving us divine insight when we needed it most.

Jesus promised His disciples that the Holy Spirit would “teach” them everything they needed to know and “remind” them what Jesus said (John 14:26). Also, the Spirit would “guide” them into the truth and “disclose to [them] what is to come” (16:13 NASB). Teaching, reminding, guiding, and disclosing. These are the Spirit’s behind-the-scenes ministries that often go unnoticed but are so essential to our spiritual life and well-being.

In this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we’ll consider how the Holy Spirit illumines our minds and how He gives wisdom to help us untangle a knotty problem or make a difficult decision. We’ll learn to be more sensitive to the Spirit’s gentle hand moving in the secret chambers of our hearts.



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## The Spirit Who Surprises

1 Corinthians 2:1–13



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Perhaps you are at an impasse in a relationship or at a crossroads regarding an important decision. Maybe you need insight from Scripture or clarity about God's will. James wrote,

*If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. (James 1:5)*

Use the space below to lay your situation before the Lord and to ask for His wisdom. As you open God's Word, invite the Holy Spirit to teach, remind, guide, and disclose God's way to you.



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Jesus surprised His disciples when He told them, "It is best for you that I go away" (John 16:7). But then He reassured them that only by His leaving could the Holy Spirit come to indwell and empower them. The Holy Spirit would be the wind beneath their wings as they went out as witnesses. He would be the divine power giving flight to the disciples' mission, convicting "the world of its sin" (16:8), and leading sinners to Christ.

Jesus' promise about the Holy Spirit was fulfilled in Paul and modeled in his ministry. In *1 Corinthians 2:1–13*, Paul described his total reliance on the Holy Spirit's power in his missionary work in Corinth, and the results that followed were remarkable. Let's take a closer look.





## The Spirit Who Surprises

*1 Corinthians 2:1–13*



### Observation: Paul's Example of the Holy Spirit's Inner Ministry

Paul had just come to Corinth from Athens, where he had the opportunity to speak to Greece's elite philosophers, the Council of the Areopagus. Paul delivered a superb explanation of the gospel, but the response was mixed. Take a moment to read what happened in [Acts 17:32–34](#).

As far as we know, Paul never planted a church in Athens. Perhaps this experience confirmed what Paul already knew—the success of the gospel didn't depend on human powers of persuasion.

Silver-tongued philosophers were a dime a dozen in Greece, and people expected a good show whenever one came to town. So, when Paul arrived in Corinth, he presented himself as just the opposite, a working-class tentmaker ([Acts 18:1–3](#)). Let's observe in 1 Corinthians 2:1–13 four workings of the Spirit that characterized Paul's life and ministry.

### The Spirit Demonstrates God's Unique Power—1 Corinthians 2:1–5

What did Paul determine *not* to do in Corinth, according to [1 Corinthians 2:1](#)? Instead, in [2:2–4](#), what did Paul say he did?

What reason did Paul give for his approach with the Corinthians, according to [2:5](#)? Why is this mind-set toward ministry so important in our day as well?





## The Spirit Who Surprises

1 Corinthians 2:1–13

*The Spirit empowered Paul's message, his leadership, and his style of ministry. As a result, the awesome presence of God was felt. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

### The Spirit Searches God's Hidden Wisdom—1 Corinthians 2:6–10

Not only did Paul refuse to rely on his power of persuasion, he also refused to preach what kind of wisdom, according to [1 Corinthians 2:6](#)? Why not?

Instead, Paul preached God's plan to offer salvation to the whole world through Christ. What did Paul say about the nature of this wisdom in [2:7–8](#)? From whom was the wisdom of God hidden?

According to [2:9–10](#), to whom was the wisdom of God given? What essential role did the Spirit play in Paul's ministry?





## The Spirit Who Surprises

1 Corinthians 2:1–13

*We can't learn from books the depths of God's truth. God's truth must come from a member of the Godhead, and the one appointed to that task is the Holy Spirit, who lives within every child of God. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

### The Spirit Reveals God's Deep Thoughts—1 Corinthians 2:11–12

According to [1 Corinthians 2:11–12](#), what treasure does the Holy Spirit offer only to believers? What makes it possible for us to receive this treasure?

*At the moment of salvation, we were given the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit came to live within us, ready to reveal to us the wisdom of God, the deep things of God when we need them. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

### The Spirit Teaches God's Profound Insights—1 Corinthians 2:13

Paul knew that the wisdom and power in his ministry didn't come from him. What was Paul's role, according to [1 Corinthians 2:13](#)?





The Spirit Who Surprises

1 Corinthians 2:1–13

Because the Spirit works behind the scenes, Paul didn't need to put on a show to convince people to follow Christ. All Paul needed was the *Paraclete*—the name for the Holy Spirit in the New Testament to express His vital role in our lives. Let's take a closer look at this important word.



**Interpretation: The Meaning of *Paraclete***

Word studies help unlock the meaning of a passage and inform our understanding of a theological concept. Read the five verses in which the Greek word, *paraklētos*, appears in the New Testament, all written by John. Summarize what John said about the Paraclete, which referred not only to the Spirit but also to Christ. Note how various Bible versions translate the word, as well as the alternate translations.

Verse	Summary
<i>John 14:16</i>	
<i>John 14:26</i>	
<i>John 15:26</i>	
<i>John 16:7–8</i>	
<i>1 John 2:1</i>	

Finding an English equivalent for *paraklētos* is difficult! The Greek word is made up of *para*, which means “alongside,” and *kletos*, which means “called.” So, the Paraclete comes alongside to help and counsel, but if we had to choose one meaning to describe the Paraclete's central function it would be advocacy—a function that describes the work of both Christ and the Spirit and on which Paul totally depended.





## The Spirit Who Surprises

1 Corinthians 2:1–13

Why did Paul intentionally preach “in weakness—timid and trembling” (1 Corinthians 2:3)? What did Paul count on the Spirit to do on his behalf?

Reflect on the verses in the chart above and write your definition of *paraklētos*. What does the Spirit do for you as your “behind-the-scenes” Paraclete?

*In place of weakness, the Spirit brings power. In place of ignorance, He brings knowledge. In place of human understanding, He brings divine wisdom. In place of superficiality, He brings the depths of God’s plan. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### Correlation: The Unfathomable Depths of God

The wisdom Paul preached was not found in books or taught him by rabbis. His wisdom came from the Spirit, who dives into the depths of God to bring us His hidden treasures of truth through God’s Word.

What praise did Paul offer to God in [Romans 11:33–36](#) about the lofty nature of God’s wisdom?





## The Spirit Who Surprises

1 Corinthians 2:1–13

Without the Spirit's help, the deep wealth of God would forever be out of our reach. So, join Paul in praise. "Come boldly and confidently into God's presence" (Ephesians 3:12), seeking His wisdom for your situation.



### Application: Relying on the Spirit's Surprising Ways

In his book, *Embraced by the Spirit*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll lists some surprising moments in which he has received the Holy Spirit's wisdom.

- Biblical insights I would otherwise have missed
- A sudden awareness of God's will, the presence of danger, or a sense of peace in the midst of chaos
- A surge of bold confidence in a setting where there would otherwise have been fear and hesitation
- A quiet, calm awareness that I was not alone, even though no other person was actually with me
- The undeniable, surrounding awareness of evil . . . including the dark sinister presence of demonic forces<sup>1</sup>

Can you identify with Pastor Chuck's experiences? Which inner ministry from the Holy Spirit have you experienced?

As we saw in this study, Paul relied completely on the working of the Spirit in his life and ministry. What aspect of Paul's example stands out as a guide for you in your situation?





## The Spirit Who Surprises

1 Corinthians 2:1–13

Write a prayer inviting God's Spirit to act as your Paraclete in your situation.

Perhaps now you can better recognize the Spirit's subtle movements in your life and work. When you sin, Jesus is your advocate, pleading "[your] case before the Father" (1 John 2:1). When you pray, the Spirit is also your advocate—teaching, reminding, guiding, and disclosing the wisdom you need at just right time you need it. Look for evidence of the Spirit's gentle movement in your heart this week. He may surprise you!



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, open my hands to receive Your wisdom. Open my eyes to see Your way. Open my heart to feel the Spirit's touch. Through the Spirit's indwelling presence, remind me of Your truth, disclose Your hidden path, and guide me in Your will. I refuse to act in my own strength. Instead, I yield to the Holy Spirit's power to act through me in surprising ways as only He can. In Jesus' name, amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Embraced by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 92.





## FLYING CLOSER TO THE FLAME

### STUDY SIX

#### Draw Me Nearer . . . Nearer

##### *Selected Scriptures*

*Since the Holy Spirit searches all things, He can give us insight that transcends human abilities and learning. It's the exciting part of walking with Him.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**I**N the previous *Searching the Scriptures* study, we saw Paul flying closer to the flame when he relied *completely* “on the power of the Holy Spirit” in his ministry in Corinth (1 Corinthians 2:1–2). He modeled how the Spirit reveals to us God’s wisdom and guides us—sometimes in surprising ways—as we depend on Him.

From Paul, we turn our attention to Stephen. In the account of Stephen’s ministry and martyrdom in Acts 6–7, we see the dynamics of the Spirit at work in a uniquely powerful way.

Let’s follow Stephen’s footsteps to the bloodstained street where he made his final stand before he was cut down by a stone-throwing mob. Interestingly, Paul himself was present at the scene, when he went by the name Saul. Although young Saul didn’t realize it then, he had a front-row seat to see the fullness of the Spirit on display in Stephen . . . and the beginnings of a new era in God’s plan for His people.



#### PREPARE YOUR HEART

As you prepare for this *Searching the Scriptures* study, pause and ask the Lord to help you see His Spirit in ways you may have never seen Him before.



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## Draw Me Nearer . . . Nearer

### *Selected Scriptures*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Stephen's name first appears in the New Testament in a list of men selected to manage food distribution to widows in the church. Stephen heads the list, and by his name, a special note states that he was "a man *full of faith and the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 6:5, emphasis added).

"Full of the Spirit" is the same as filled with the Spirit, and, as we've learned in our studies, it means to be fully dependent on and controlled by the Spirit who empowers us from within. All believers are *indwelt* by the Spirit, for our bodies are temples "of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:19). But not all believers yield themselves to the Spirit's control and, therefore, are not *empowered* by the Spirit like Stephen was. Let's see how Stephen presented the Spirit's fullness in his bold witness for Christ.



### Observation: The Spirit's Dynamic in Stephen's Life

In the observation phase of *Searching the Scriptures*, we look for people, places, and events—each of which are key elements in the biblical narrative.

### Stephen's Spirit-Filled Ministry—Acts 6:8–10

Stephen is the central figure in Acts 6:8–7:59. How was he described, and what was he doing, according to *Acts 6:8*?





## Draw Me Nearer . . . Nearer

### *Selected Scriptures*

Who are the next characters in the account, according to [Acts 6:9](#)? Where were these Jewish men from? Locate these places on a [Bible map](#) or Bible atlas. What do you observe about Jerusalem's proximity to these regions?

What was it about Stephen in [6:10](#) that these men could not stand against?

*The accusers did not have strength enough to stand against Stephen. Under the control of the Spirit, he was unintimidated by his critics. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*





Draw Me Nearer . . . Nearer

Selected Scriptures

Stephen's Spirit-Filled Demeanor—Acts 6:11–7:1

The men were not just opposing Stephen but also God, just as they had opposed God when they put Jesus on trial. In the chart below, note the parallels between Stephen's trial before the Jewish court and Jesus' trial before the same court only months earlier.

Verse	Stephen	Verse	Jesus
<i>Acts 6:11</i>		<i>Matthew 26:59</i>	
<i>Acts 6:12</i>		<i>Matthew 26:57</i>	
<i>Acts 6:13–14</i>		<i>Mark 14:57–58</i>	
<i>Acts 7:1</i>		<i>Mark 14:60</i>	

Like His Savior, Stephen endured an unjust trial before a corrupt court. How did the Spirit present Himself through Stephen in *Acts 6:15*? What did Stephen's outward appearance communicate about his inner being?

*Bold as a lion, confident in God, under the full control of the Spirit, Stephen moved through the waters of resistance without getting off course. The Spirit's filling was obvious.*

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll





## Draw Me Nearer . . . Nearer

### *Selected Scriptures*

#### Stephen's Spirit-Filled Message—Acts 7:2–53

In response to the false accusations, Stephen delivered an eloquent defense of Jesus as the promised Messiah and heralded a new era in God's plan in which the Holy Spirit indwelt believers. Read Stephen's sermon in [Acts 7:2–53](#) and fill in the blanks below.

In his sermon, Stephen traced God's faithfulness to Israel, beginning with God's covenant with \_\_\_\_\_ ([Acts 7:2–19](#)).

Through Moses, God brought the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and promised a future deliverer, a \_\_\_\_\_ like Moses ([7:37](#)).

Despite God's blessing, the people rebelled by \_\_\_\_\_ ([7:39–40](#)).

Even so, God remained faithful, filling the tabernacle and then the temple with His presence ([7:46–47](#)). However, "temples made by human hands" cannot contain our God who rules over heaven and earth ([7:48–50](#)). The Spirit's coming at Pentecost represented an aspect of God's redemptive plan kept hidden in ages past but revealed through Christ. How did Stephen boldly conclude his sermon, according to [7:51–53](#)?

*Stephen had unintimidated confidence as he came to the point in his sermon about the religious leaders' guilt in the death of Christ, and they couldn't stand it!*

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll





## Draw Me Nearer . . . Nearer

### *Selected Scriptures*

#### Stephen's Spirit-Filled Death—Acts 7:54–60

What events occurred in [Acts 7:54–60](#)? How did the religious leaders' actions prove Stephen's indictment against them was true and they were the guilty ones?

What qualities did Stephen display in his final moments? What did the Spirit allow Stephen to see because he was “full of the Holy Spirit” ([Acts 7:55](#))?

How did Stephen's death parallel the death of Jesus ([Luke 23:34, 46](#))?

*Stephen was filled by the Holy Spirit, who gave him supernatural ability to deliver a message against men holding stones to kill him. And then, at the time of his stoning, Stephen was able to see the living God and pronounced words of praise and forgiveness. Is that part of the filling? I think so! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*





## Draw Me Nearer . . . Nearer

### *Selected Scriptures*



### **Interpretation: The Spirit's Ministry at Death's Door**

What truths about the filling of the Holy Spirit can we draw from Stephen's example? For starters, Stephen's calm and confident demeanor could only have come from the Spirit (Acts 6:10). What truth can you gather from this aspect of the Spirit's ministry in Stephen?

When Stephen was dying, God gave Spirit-filled Stephen a glimpse of his Savior who stood just on the other side of death's door. What truth do you glean from Stephen's example about the Spirit's tender ministry to believers nearing death?

Finally, we can't miss the parallels between Stephen and Jesus in their final hours. What truth do you see in Stephen's example regarding our likeness with Christ as part of the filling of the Spirit?





### Draw Me Nearer . . . Nearer

#### *Selected Scriptures*

Stephen's *confidence* through persecution, *insight* into Scriptures, *foresight* of heaven, and *intimacy* with Jesus were beautiful outcomes of flying closer to the flame. It's all possible because of our "anointing" with the Spirit that John wrote about in 1 John 2.



#### **Correlation: The Anointing of the Spirit**

What did John say about God's anointing in [1 John 2:20](#)? Note the ways the New Living Translation and the New American Standard Bible translate this verse.

How did John explain the anointing in [2:26–27](#)?

Anointing refers to the Father giving the Spirit to live within believers (1 John 2:27). Just as Old Testament priests were anointed once, so also were we anointed once by God when we placed our faith in Christ. The anointing of the Spirit provides an inner awareness of God's nearness to you and an inner compass that directs your path—a kind of spiritual knowledge Stephen possessed that the Jewish leaders lacked.





## Draw Me Nearer . . . Nearer

### *Selected Scriptures*



#### **Application: Don't Be Afraid to Draw Near**

Stephen's example urges us to draw near to the Spirit and to rely on His strength in crisis. Pastor Chuck adds this encouragement:

Come nearer . . . don't be afraid to fly closer to the flame. It can revolutionize your prayer life, your daily witness, your own struggling, timid self-image, and for sure your confidence in God. It can give you strength and tranquility in the midst of sickness, even Stephen-like assurance in the face of death.<sup>1</sup>

Have you been reluctant to draw near to the Holy Spirit, perhaps for fear of what He might do if you handed Him control? What fears may have kept you at a distance?

In the quote above, Pastor Chuck mentioned a list of ways the Spirit can minister to us. Which of these ways do you most long for?





### Draw Me Nearer . . . Nearer

#### *Selected Scriptures*

Right now, draw near to the Spirit in a prayer of dependence. Invite Him to be the strength you need today. Write your prayer here.

When we seek a lifestyle of flying closer to the flame, the Spirit may lead us in ways we don't expect and to places where we must stand alone against great opposition. But don't be afraid, for in the moment of testing, He will fill you with a sense of absolute confidence and unusual courage that comes to those who walk in the fullness of the Spirit.



#### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, remove from me the fear of releasing control to Your Spirit. Take me a step beyond my comfort zone on my journey of discovery about the Spirit to trust His wisdom and to depend on His power. Give me the quiet, calm confidence of Stephen before his enemies and even in the face of the ultimate enemy, death. Someday, I will see Your Son, Jesus, and feel His embrace welcoming me home. In His name, amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Flying Closer to the Flame* (Dallas: Word, 1993), 126.





## FLYING CLOSER TO THE FLAME

### STUDY SEVEN

## Those Unidentified Inner Promptings

### *Selected Scriptures*

*We have within us the compelling presence of the Spirit, whose still, small voice addresses the needs in our lives and makes known to us the truth.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

Now we enter a realm of the Spirit's ministry that is, frankly, mysterious. We call this ministry of the Spirit, "unidentified inner promptings" (UIPs). They are "unidentified" because, at first, we may not recognize them as coming from the Spirit. They are "inner" because we experience them in the deepest parts of our soul. And they are "promptings" because we sense the Spirit moving in us rather than see or hear Him.

God created us with a unique ability to receive the Spirit's promptings. According to Pastor Chuck Swindoll, our souls include "secret inner chambers and hidden capacities other created beings lack." He continues,

I also would suggest that such an inner system provides for the reception of divine information and the understanding of biblical truths. . . . By being "fearfully and wonderfully made," we are equipped to grasp the Spirit's messages as well as sense His compelling, awesome presence. That explains why we can hear His "still small voice" and decipher messages of peace or warning, conviction or guidance. God created us with that capacity.<sup>1</sup>



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## Those Unidentified Inner Promptings

### *Selected Scriptures*

How does the Holy Spirit prompt us? Certainly, through words of Scripture, which penetrate to the core of our being, “cutting between soul and spirit” (Hebrews 4:12). But the Spirit also moves in our spirits through feelings of relief, a sense of peace, a surge of courage, an alertness to danger, a flash of insight, or even a flicker of intuition.

We’ve all experienced these unexplainable tugs on our soul, haven’t we? They are not like the random thoughts that bounce around our brain but solid reassurances of divine guidance and conviction. They are the Spirit’s *unidentified inner promptings*. Let’s find out more about them!



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Thank God for creating us with the capacity for personal interaction with Him. Join the psalmist in Psalm 139:13–14 in offering Him praise, and invite the Spirit to minister in your innermost being as you study God’s Word.

*You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body  
and knit me together in my mother’s womb.  
Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex!  
Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it!*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES



To shed light on the mystery of the Spirit’s promptings, we’ll explore four biblical examples of the Spirit’s inner ministry. Because we cover multiple passages of Scripture on the Spirit’s UIPs, we’ll use charts combining the observation and interpretation steps of the *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method.





# Those Unidentified Inner Promptings

*Selected Scriptures*

<b>A Desperate and Lonely Prophet</b> <b>1 Kings 19:1–18</b>	
Our first example of the Holy Spirit’s prompting comes from the life of Elijah. This account demonstrates that <i>in times of loneliness and desperation, the Spirit prompts hope and encouragement.</i>	
 <b>Observation</b>	 <b>Interpretation</b>
<p><b>1a.</b> In <i>1 Kings 19:1–9</i>, what indicates Elijah’s desperation, and how did God help him? Where did Elijah go?</p> <p><b>1b.</b> In <i>1 Kings 9:10–18</i>, how did God pass by Elijah? What contrasts did the author use to depict the true nature of God?</p> <p><b>1c.</b> What did God’s UIP within Elijah convey to him?</p>	<p><b>2a.</b> What is “the sound of a gentle whisper” (1 Kings 19:12), and what about God does this concept communicate?</p> <p><b>2b.</b> Why did God give Elijah a UIP? How did it help Elijah?</p>



*There have been times in my life when the Lord’s promptings have been just as real as Elijah’s. I didn’t hear a voice, I didn’t see a vision, but I felt His presence as real as if I could touch Him. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*





## Those Unidentified Inner Promptings



### *Selected Scriptures*

<b>A Determined and Faithful Apostle</b> <b>Acts 20:16–24</b>	
<p>Next, consider the apostle Paul when he gave his tearful farewell to the elders of the church at Ephesus. His resolve to go to Jerusalem illustrates that <i>in times of threatening fears, the Spirit prompts a calm determination and courage</i>.</p>	
 <b>Observation</b>	 <b>Interpretation</b>
<p><b>1a.</b> Begin by observing <a href="#">Acts 20:16–24</a>. What phrases in this passage describe Paul’s UIP?</p> <p><b>1b.</b> What attitudes do you observe in Paul?</p>	<p><b>2a.</b> What did Paul mean by, “I am bound by the Spirit” (Acts 20:22)?</p> <p><b>2b.</b> Paul said, “The Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me” (20:23 NASB). What did Paul mean?</p> <p><b>2c.</b> How did the Spirit’s promptings firm up Paul’s resolve?</p>

*Normally, when we know that bonds and afflictions await us, we are frightened. But not when the Spirit of God brings a reassurance. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*





Those Unidentified Inner Promptings  
*Selected Scriptures*

A Life-Threatening and Harrowing Journey Acts 27	
During Paul’s stormy sea voyage to Rome, the Holy Spirit encouraged Paul, demonstrating that <i>in times of danger and disaster, the Spirit prompts inner reassurance.</i>	
 Observation	 Interpretation
<p>1a. Read the account of Paul’s turbulent voyage in <i>Acts 27</i>. Locate the ports and cities in the map, “<i>Paul’s Journey to Rome</i>.” Which verses indicate the Spirit’s ministry to Paul during this dangerous journey?</p> <p>1b. What contrasts do you observe between Paul’s poise and the others’ panic?</p>	<p>2a. In what ways do you see Paul expressing his personal interactions with God (<i>Acts 27:10, 21–26, 33–35</i>)?</p> <p>2b. What principles does this account teach about how we can walk with God through crises?</p>

*The Spirit of God prompted Paul in a night vision, giving Paul the reassurance that God was present in the trial and would keep His arms around those on the ship. Visions like this are rare but real. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



Those Unidentified Inner Promptings  
*Selected Scriptures*

A Sorrowful and Painful Ordeal Romans 8:22–26; 2 Corinthians 12:6–10	
Finally, we explore two passages from Paul’s letters explaining the Spirit’s ministry when we’re suffering. This UIP illustrates that <i>in times of great sorrow and grief, the Spirit prays for us and ministers grace to us.</i>	
 Observation	 Interpretation
<p><b>1a.</b> What help does the Spirit offer when we suffer, according to <i>Romans 8:22–26</i>?</p> <p><b>1b.</b> Observe <i>2 Corinthians 12:6–10</i>. In what situation did Paul receive a UIP? What did God reveal to Paul three times?</p>	<p><b>2a.</b> What does it mean that the Spirit “prays for us with groanings” (Romans 8:26)? How does this ministry help us when we groan?</p> <p><b>2b.</b> When Paul “begged the Lord,” God <i>said</i> something to him (2 Corinthians 12:8–9). How do you think God spoke to Paul’s spirit and brought relief?</p> <p><b>2c.</b> Sum up the Spirit’s inner ministry to us in our suffering and weakness?</p>





## Those Unidentified Inner Promptings

### *Selected Scriptures*

*Have you ever been so overwhelmed and in need that you could not even articulate your prayer? At that moment, God interprets the groanings. He understands what is best and dispatches it. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### **Correlation: The Role of Discernment**

What if someone claims he or she received a UIP, but you're not certain the experience was from the Lord? Paul warned the believers in Thessalonica to use discernment, which is also a ministry of the Spirit. What were false teachers claiming, according to [2 Thessalonians 2:1–2](#)? How could Paul's readers know whether to believe their claims?

Spiritual experiences from the Spirit will always agree with God's Word. If they don't agree, don't believe them. "Don't be fooled," Paul warned. Pray for wisdom and discernment when others speak about their spiritual experiences, and always follow Scripture as a faithful guide for your own UIPs.



### **Application: Practical Guidelines**

To sum up our study, review the four ways the Spirit prompted Elijah and Paul, which are four reliable examples for our spiritual journey.

1. Elijah's bout with despair illustrates that in times of loneliness and desperation, *the Spirit prompts hope and encouragement.*
2. Paul's resolve to suffer for Christ in Jerusalem illustrates that in times of threatening fears, *the Spirit prompts calm determination and courage.*
3. Paul's perilous sea voyage illustrates that in times of potential danger and disaster, *the Spirit prompts inner reassurance.*
4. Paul's thorn in the flesh illustrates that in times of great sorrow and pain, *the Spirit prays for us and ministers grace to us.*





## Those Unidentified Inner Promptings

### *Selected Scriptures*

Which of these examples most closely parallels your current situation? How have these accounts encouraged you to press on with the Spirit's strength in your situation?

Take a few moments to be still before the Lord and to prayerfully reflect. Have you sensed any UIPs? Has God's Spirit filled your spirit with hope? Encouragement? Calm determination? Courage? Reassurance? Grace? Or perhaps another inner blessing?

If you're not certain that what you're sensing is the Spirit's prompting, first, test it against God's Word. And then, if you're still not sure, ask the Lord for further confirmation. But if you *are* certain, don't let others discount your experience. Treasure the Spirit's intimate ministry in you and give thanks!

What a blessing when He floods your soul with hope when all seems lost! How wonderful is the Spirit's relief during suffering, clarity through confusion, and grace to flourish despite pain! Thank the Lord for His Spirit who tenderly prays for you "with groanings that cannot be expressed in words" (Romans 8:26) and communes with you in the secret places of your soul.





## Those Unidentified Inner Promptings

*Selected Scriptures*



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You for the confidence I draw from Your Word and the reassurance I sense through Your Spirit. You give me peace amid pressure and hope to endure whatever hardship lies ahead today. Help me discern Your work in my life, and make clear Your voice among the many voices all around me. Thank You for Your calm, quiet work in my life. In Jesus' name, amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Flying Closer to the Flame* (Dallas: Word, 1993), 137.



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## FLYING CLOSER TO THE FLAME

### STUDY EIGHT

## The Spirit and Our Emotions

### *Selected Scriptures*

*There are times in the Christian life when the Spirit of God ignites our emotions and prompts our feelings. When He does that, it is nothing short of electrifying.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**M**ANY Christians view their emotions with a wary eye. As young believers, perhaps they were warned not to pay much attention to their feelings because they can be unreliable and fallible. Mature Christians, they were told, keep emotions in check and certainly never trust them as spiritual guides.

Do these cautions sound familiar? Have others told you to discount your feelings or even stuff them away for the sake of your faith?

If so, remember that God created our emotions, including them in His original blueprint for humanity. “If He created us with the capacity to feel,” writes Pastor Chuck Swindoll, “shouldn’t we be free to talk about our feelings, to express them, and to value them in ourselves and in others?”<sup>1</sup> **Yes!**

Additionally, because God Himself has intellect, volition, and emotions, wouldn’t He want to relate to us on all three levels, including our emotions? Yes, He would, and He gave us His Spirit to help us do just that.



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## The Spirit and Our Emotions

### *Selected Scriptures*



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Our relationship with God flourishes as we relate to Him as whole people—mind, will, and emotions. Open the Word with this simple prayer from your heart,

*Father, I long for a more intimate relationship with You that includes my emotions. Help me flourish as a whole person and to understand more clearly the role of my feelings in my walk in the Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In [Genesis 1](#), we discover the origins of human personality and the theological framework for our feelings. Read the chapter, noting the progression of creative acts from simple to complex, culminating in the crown jewel of God's handiwork.



### Observation: God's Crowning Creation

Genesis 1 is full of repetitive themes and phrases, contrasts and comparisons, and subtle emphases—all of which we observe in the first phase of *Searching the Scriptures*.

According to [Genesis 1:11–25](#), God made plants, trees, fish, birds, animals, and insects. What repeating phrases appear in this section with a kind of literary rhythm? The New American Standard Bible translates these repetitions in ways that may be easier to identify.





## The Spirit and Our Emotions

### *Selected Scriptures*

The cadence of “after their kind” (Genesis 1:11–12, 21, 24–25 NASB) suddenly stops in [Genesis 1:26–27](#). What did God pattern humans after? What contrast was the author making between God’s other creations and humans?

These verses contain a fascinating phrase on which a great deal of our understanding of the human personality rests: *the image of God*. In the interpretation phase of *Searching the Scriptures*, we dig deeper into this concept.



### Interpretation: The Meaning of “Image of God”

According to the first part of [Genesis 1:26](#), for what reason did God make human beings in His image? According to the second part of 1:26, what were humans to do as God’s image-bearers?

God made humans to reign over creation like He reigns—not in His place but under His authority, ruling in the same good and wise manner as He rules. But there’s more to the meaning of “image of God.” Let’s turn to Genesis 2 to see how the first man and woman were like God as whole persons.





## The Spirit and Our Emotions

### *Selected Scriptures*

#### The Mind of God

Creation's intricate design showcases God's magnificent mind. He endowed humans with minds as well, giving humanity a level of intelligence higher than all the other creatures. How was Adam's mind at work in [Genesis 2:19–20](#)?

#### The Heart of God

The heart of God is evident in His relational nature and the love He expresses toward His creation. How did Adam express his God-given heart toward Eve when God brought her to him in [Genesis 2:21–25](#)? How did their hearts join together in the purest form of unity and love?

By “heart” we mean the seat of our emotions—love, joy, delight, affection, elation, sorrow, longing, hope, passion. God built into us a full range of emotions to complement our intellect. Emotions also spur us to action, energizing our will—the third element of our personhood.





## The Spirit and Our Emotions

### *Selected Scriptures*

#### The Will of God

God bestowed on humans a will that frees us to make our own choices. How did God's command in [Genesis 2:16–17](#) demonstrate Adam and Eve's capacity to choose? Why do you think this capacity was necessary to have a relationship with God?

Mind, heart, will. These three essential marks of God's image blend together to make us whole people. No facet of the gem that is "us" is dispensable. All are vital for our spiritual life to flourish.

*God gave humankind something He did not give the plant kingdom, animal kingdom, or even the angels. When He created humans, He gave them a personality like His own.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll





The Spirit and Our Emotions  
Selected Scriptures



Correlation: The Significant Role of Our Feelings

Emotions add vibrance to our relationship with God, and in Scripture we see a full spectrum of them. In the chart below, write down the emotions you find in the verses and how they benefit your spiritual life. We've filled in the first blank as an example.

Verses	Emotions and Spiritual Benefits
<i>Psalms 146:1–2</i>	God invites me to praise Him with my whole being, including my emotions. Praise draws me closer to Him.
<i>Proverbs 1:7</i>	
<i>Acts 16:18</i>	
<i>Romans 12:9–13</i>	
<i>Romans 12:14–18</i>	
<i>2 Corinthians 4:8</i>	
<i>2 Corinthians 9:7</i>	
<i>Ephesians 4:26</i>	
<i>Philippians 4:6–7</i>	
<i>Philippians 4:11</i>	
<i>1 Thessalonians 4:13</i>	
<i>1 John 4:19</i>	





## The Spirit and Our Emotions

### *Selected Scriptures*

The chart could go on for pages! Emotions range broadly in our walk with God. Christ Himself wept with grief, felt deep compassion, rejoiced, was moved by anger, was troubled in His spirit, and prayed with an intensity that left sweat pouring from Him as drops of blood (Luke 22:44).

Let your emotions take their rightful place alongside truth in your relationship with the Father. Free yourself to love extravagantly. Be tenderhearted. Feel deep grief and sadness. Express your joy to the fullest! Be the vibrant image-bearer God created you to be.

*Humans were given a mind to know God, emotions to love God, and a will to obey God. We are not whole, in the sense of complete in our God-given personality, unless all three are present and at work in us and in our walk with God. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### Application: Next Steps

As we fly closer to the flame emotionally, the Holy Spirit acts as our spiritual gyroscope, keeping our mind, emotions, and volition from tilting too far to one side or the other. By walking closely with the Spirit, we avoid intellectualism (overemphasis on the mind), emotionalism (overemphasis on feelings), or fanaticism (overemphasis on the will). We stay balanced.

Specifically, how do our emotions enhance our spiritual life? Pastor Chuck explains the spiritual benefits based on his experience.

Rather than their being unimportant, I have found that my feelings often represent some of the most sensitive areas in my life touched by the Spirit of God. Not infrequently do my emotions play a vital role in how and where the Spirit is guiding me, giving me reasons to make significant decisions, cautioning me to back off, and reproving me for something in my life that needs immediate attention.<sup>2</sup>

Reflecting on Pastor Chuck's example, how has the Spirit of God touched your life emotionally in the past?





## **The Spirit and Our Emotions**

### *Selected Scriptures*

Is the Holy Spirit tugging on your emotions today, perhaps regarding a decision, a person, or a personal issue? Search your feelings for the Spirit's touch and write down what you discover.

Certain aspects of God go beyond the human mind's ability to grasp. We need emotions to fully experience the love of Christ that "is too great to understand" (Ephesians 3:19) or the peace of God that "surpasses all comprehension" (Philippians 4:7 NASB).

If you've locked up your feelings in your relationship with God, what might open the door?

God never intended your relationship with Him to be dispassionate, all facts and no feeling. Let the flame of the Spirit warm you up to your own emotions, freeing you to be real and whole.



### **A FINAL PRAYER**

In the following space, pour out your heart to God in the form of a prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to guide your heart. Let your feelings flow.

*Father,*

### ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Flying Closer to the Flame* (Dallas: Word, 1993), 154–55.
2. Swindoll, *Flying Closer to the Flame*, 155.





## FLYING CLOSER TO THE FLAME

### STUDY NINE

## Thinking Theologically about Sickness and Healing

### *Selected Scriptures*

*I do not know why God sovereignly chooses to heal one person and not another, but that is His choice and His right. I must minister to both.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

HUMANITY bears not only the image of God but also the scars of suffering. Our world is full of pain and hurt. We all know people who are enduring a physical or emotional illness which tenaciously clings to them despite countless prayers for relief.

We also know, or have heard about, people whom God miraculously healed. Their sudden recovery amazed everyone—including their doctors who had stamped their case file, “terminal.” And yet, God completely restored them.

While such miracles may leave medical experts scratching their heads, they send our hearts soaring with hope and confirm our faith. They also spark questions:

- Why does God heal some people while so many others still suffer?
- What about people who claim special powers of healing—are such claims legitimate?
- Would God heal more sick people if their faith were stronger, their prayers more sincere, and their hearts purer?





## Thinking Theologically about Sickness and Healing

### Selected Scriptures

There's no better place to find answers to these questions than God's Word. Let's begin our search by laying a row of theological foundation stones on which we can build a solid understanding of sin, sickness, and healing.



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Sickness is a sensitive subject that may come close to your home. Your loved one may be desperately ill, or, perhaps, you are the one suffering. Share your questions with the Lord as you bring your pain to Him. Draw near to Him so you can feel His peace and find answers from His Word.

*Father, suffering is a real issue in my life. With a humble desire to know Your heart, I acknowledge that Your ways are higher than mine, and I trust You with those mysteries of heaven that are beyond my grasp . . . but I seek answers. I come to Your Word for wisdom, comfort, assurance, guidance, and peace. In Jesus' name, amen.*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

According to Genesis 1–2, God created humans in His image, and the first couple enjoyed a world completely free from the corrupting influence of sin. As we turn the page to Genesis 3, however, we see an ominous shadow stretching over the garden after Adam and Eve sinned. Their disobedience set off a string of consequences, including disease and death (Genesis 3:1–24). Let's take a closer look at sin as it relates to sickness and healing in the following Bible passages.



### Observation: Foundational Verses

In the initial phase of *Searching the Scriptures*, we observe what the Bible says without shading the words with our own opinions. The following verses shed light on our subject from various angles. Read them thoughtfully as you answer the questions.





## Thinking Theologically about Sickness and Healing

### *Selected Scriptures*

#### Sin

What do you notice about the ways Paul used the word *sin* in [Romans 5:12](#)? Specifically, what do you see regarding sins as human actions: “Adam sinned” and “everyone sinned”? What do you perceive about sin as a curse: “sin entered the world” and “sin brought death”?

[First Corinthians 15:21–22](#) further explains the curse of sin, adding a contrast between being “in Adam” and “in Christ” (NASB). What do you observe in these verses?

#### Sickness

How did David say his sin impacted him physically in [Psalm 32:3–5](#)?





## Thinking Theologically about Sickness and Healing

### *Selected Scriptures*

What assumption did the disciples make about the reason for the man's sight impairment in *John 9:1–3*?  
How did Jesus respond?

### Healing

Paul healed sick people, as in the case of Publius' father who "was ill with fever and dysentery. Paul went in and prayed for him, and laying his hands on him, he healed him" (Acts 28:8). And yet, what did Paul do regarding sick Trophimus, according to *2 Timothy 4:20*? What's the difference between these two cases?

In addition, what was God's answer to Paul's personal prayer for healing in *2 Corinthians 12:7–9*?





## Thinking Theologically about Sickness and Healing

### *Selected Scriptures*

Review your observations from these wide-ranging passages about sin, sickness, and healing. What point stands out to you the most?

*I've said all of my ministry that I believe in divine healing. I simply don't believe in divine healers. I don't think I've ever ministered to more disillusioned people than those who had been promised healing by a healer and they were not healed. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### Interpretation: Theological Facts

In the interpretation phase, we draw out truths from Scripture that convey what the author meant. We can list six statements in thematic pairs that emerge from the verses we observed above.

Primarily, there are two types of sin—original sin and personal sin. This statement is based on [Romans 5:12](#), and other passages support it, such as [Romans 3:23](#) and [7:14–23](#). Look up *original sin* and *personal sin* in your Bible study resources and explain what these terms mean. For an online resource, consult [The Encyclopedia of the Bible](#) at [biblegateway.com](#).





## Thinking Theologically about Sickness and Healing

### *Selected Scriptures*

Original sin introduced sickness, suffering, and death to the human race. [Romans 5:13–18](#) and [1 Corinthians 15:21](#) elaborate this point. How could the first sin of Adam become the poisoned spring from which sickness, suffering, and death flow?

*The graveyards are full of tombstones related to the fall of Adam. Had there never been original sin, how wonderful life could have been. Yet sin continues to pollute the human race. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

Often, there exists a direct relationship between personal sins and physical sickness. David's experience in [Psalm 32:3–5](#) illustrates this point, along with Paul's warning in [1 Corinthians 11:29–30](#). How might personal sins lead to physical sickness?

Sometimes there is no relationship between personal sins and human afflictions. Jesus corrected the disciples, saying, "It was not because of his sins or his parents' sins" ([John 9:3](#)). What can you conclude regarding making assumptions about the cause of a person's suffering?





## Thinking Theologically about Sickness and Healing

### *Selected Scriptures*

*Jesus' heart is moved by your pain. He grieves with you over the length of your depression. He sits beside you in the hospital room. He is touched with feelings of sympathy for you in your weakness. It's not as simple as confessing sin and finding recovery. If it were, He would say so. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

Sometimes it is not God's will that we be healed. Paul's experience related in [2 Corinthians 12:7–9](#) and also in [2 Timothy 4:20](#) confirms this point. How might we seek God's healing while submitting to God's will?

On other occasions, it is God's will that we be healed, and He does so. Paul's healing of Publius' father in [Acts 28:8](#) illustrates this point. Jesus also performed many healings ([Matthew 4:23–25](#)), as did the apostles ([Acts 3:1–7](#); [5:12–16](#); [8:4–8](#); [9:32–34](#); [19:11–12](#)). What was God's purpose behind all these healings? What aspect of God's nature and plan did they illustrate?

*Be careful what you promise a person who is sick. God does not forsake us. He is with us during the hardest times, but His presence is not always a promise of healing.  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*





## Thinking Theologically about Sickness and Healing

### *Selected Scriptures*



#### **Correlation: By His Wounds We Are Healed**

Some Bible teachers point to *Isaiah 53:5* and *1 Peter 2:21–24* to say that Jesus' suffering on the cross promises physical healing for all who believe. Read these passages and explain your interpretation of the phrase, "by his wounds you are healed," in the space below. To what kind of healing was the author referring?

Christ's death promises deliverance from sin's curse and ultimate healing when we step from this life into glory where death and disease will be no more. Some, however, say that we can claim our healing now, and the only obstacles are unconfessed sin and lack of faith. How would you respond?

*How anxious we are for relief from pain, ideally, instant relief! But how necessary is the period of waiting, in which we become wiser and deeper and in which humility has a chance to grow! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*





## Thinking Theologically about Sickness and Healing

### *Selected Scriptures*



#### Application: What to Do When We Are Sick

Why does God heal some and not others? The full answer resides in the mind of God, which is beyond our comprehension. So, we view the subject of healing through the lens of faith, content to trust God's wisdom and rest in His sovereign plan. However, Scripture doesn't leave us wondering what to do when we're sick. James offers specific steps in James 5:13–16, which we'll discover in the next *Searching the Scriptures* study.

Until then, Paul helps us put theology into practice by his example in [2 Corinthians 12:7–9](#). Paul wrote regarding his thorn in the flesh, “Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away” (12:8), freeing us to do the same. Ask the Lord to heal your suffering or your loved ones' suffering in the space below.

Paul also recorded God's response, “Each time he said, ‘My grace is all you need’” (12:9). Whether or not God heals you, He generously pours the balm of grace over your hurting heart. Share with Him your desire to receive His grace.





## Thinking Theologically about Sickness and Healing

### *Selected Scriptures*

Paul prayed for healing but received divine power instead: “I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me” (12:9). How might the power of Christ work through your weakness today?

God may not answer all our questions, but He does meet our deepest needs. As you close this study, thank the Lord for His compassionate companionship during your season of suffering.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You my Shepherd that, although I walk through dark valleys, I do not need to be afraid. “You are close beside me,” assured the psalmist, and I cling to that promise (Psalm 23:4). You also promise a feast of blessings and a cup that overflows awaiting me in Your house someday. I long for that day. In Jesus’ name, amen.*





## FLYING CLOSER TO THE FLAME

### STUDY TEN

## A Biblical Case for Healing

*James 5:13–16*

*When it is God's will that we be healed, He does so miraculously and immediately. Be sure to include those two words, for they go together.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**W**HAT do we do when we're sick? Some so-called faith healers urge sufferers to forego medical treatment and "expect a miracle." They say that pursuing medical help demonstrates a lack of faith, and sick people must trust in God's power alone for Him to heal them.

The Scriptures, however, never draw a line between praying for healing and seeking help from a physician. In fact, James' prescription for sick people includes both prayer and medical care. Let's take a closer look at his instructions for the suffering and the sick in James 5:13–16.



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Doctors prescribe medications and perform surgeries, but, ultimately, all healing comes from the One who formed our bodies. Take a few moments in prayer to offer yourself to God and receive grace to understand what His Word says about healing.

*Father, I humble myself before You as the maker and healer of my body and soul. Grant me wisdom as I learn Your ways and follow Your prescription for my life. In Jesus' name, amen.*



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## A Biblical Case for Healing

*James 5:13–16*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

James wrote his epistle to persecuted Christians whose suffering severely tested their faith. In the opening chapter, he counseled his readers to find joy despite their trials, seeing them as avenues to maturity and deeper faith in God. James invited them to pray for God's wisdom and assured them that "God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation" (James 1:12).

In his final chapter, James circled back to the subject of trials, urging "patience in suffering" and offering Job as a model of endurance (5:10–11). He concluded with practical steps to follow when we're suffering, featuring prayer as a central theme.



### Observation: The Suffering, the Cheerful, and the Sick

Observation is the first phase of *Searching the Scriptures*. As you read the verses, look for patterns, questions and answers, steps to follow, commands, and promises.

What instructions do you observe in *James 5:13*?

What do suffering hardships and being happy have in common?





## A Biblical Case for Healing

*James 5:13–16*

What steps do you observe in *James 5:14*?

What teaching about the body and soul, sickness and sin, and prayer and confession do you observe in *5:15–16*?

*Healing doesn't come because we pay some individual who claims he or she is able to heal us. Healing comes because God sovereignly and mysteriously chooses to say yes to our prayer. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*





A Biblical Case for Healing

James 5:13–16



Interpretation: The Meaning of Key Words

An accurate interpretation of Scripture often hinges on definitions of key words, such as “suffering” and “sick” in James 5:13–14. Commentaries, such as *Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*, Bible dictionaries, and lexicons help us discover the meaning of the Greek words.

An excellent online resource is [netbible.org](http://netbible.org). Go to James 5 on this website and click the “Greek” tab. The NET Bible translation of James 5 will appear on the left pane and the Greek New Testament on the right. Hover your cursor over the words *suffering* and *ill* (James 5:13–14 NET). The corresponding Greek word will be highlighted in yellow, and a box containing the definition of the Greek word will also appear. Using this resource or one of your other study aids, write down the definitions of the Greek words in the chart below.

English Word	Greek Root Word	Definition
<i>suffering</i> (James 5:13)	<i>kakopatheō</i>	
<i>ill</i> (5:14)	<i>astheneō</i>	

These terms describe two conditions that call for specific actions involving prayer. James didn’t say explicitly, but what did James imply the suffering person should pray for?

Too sick to leave their bed, ill people should summon the elders to come and to pray, “anointing [them] with oil in the name of the Lord” (5:14).





## A Biblical Case for Healing

*James 5:13–16*

In his commentary, Pastor Chuck Swindoll sheds light on the meaning of “anointing.”

We find two distinct uses of anointing with oil in the Bible. One involves a religious or ceremonial act as a symbol for consecration, as in the anointing of David as King of Israel (1 Sam. 16:13). A more mundane type of anointing was for medicinal or hygienic purposes. . . .

Most likely James has the second use of oil in mind. The idea behind the use of both prayer and anointing was that the church should seek to come to the aid of both the physical and spiritual needs of a sick person. The medicinal use of oil provided physical comfort and promoted the healing process. Please observe that for James there was *no* conflict between prayer and medicine.<sup>1</sup>

In James’ day, anointing with medicinal oil was one means of medical care. So, the implication for our day is that not only should the elders come to pray, but also the sick person should accept medical treatment. Prayer and medical care go hand in hand.

What does it mean for the elders to pray and anoint the person “*in the name of the Lord*” (James 5:14, emphasis added)?

In matters of healing, God alone has the say regarding our restoration—“the Lord will make you well” (5:15). In Greek, the word for *heal* in 5:15 is *sozo*, which means “save” or “rescue” or “preserve.” What else did James say that God has authority to grant in [5:15](#)?





## A Biblical Case for Healing

*James 5:13–16*

James concluded his instructions in [5:16](#). Put this verse in your own words and, from the context, summarize the roles of prayer and confession in healing body and soul.

*The elders are to pray over the sick person in the name of the Lord—that is, invoking God’s will, asking God’s presence and God’s blessing. And the results? When it becomes His will, “the Lord will raise him up.” I take it that it is a miraculous, instantaneous healing.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



### Correlation: Praying in Jesus’ Name for God’s Will

Praying in Jesus’ name means to pray to the Father in Jesus’ authority as His representative (John 15:16; 16:23–24). “In Jesus’ name” isn’t a magic formula we attach to prayer to get whatever we wish but an invitation to ask the Father for what *Jesus* would ask, always in accordance with the Father’s will.

Read [1 John 5:14–15](#) in the Amplified Bible. What instructions did John give about prayer that further explain (instructions explain) Jesus’ teaching?

A prayer for healing offered in the name of Jesus always appeals to the will of God, for it is only by His will and by His power that a sick person is healed.

*Doctors are not miracle workers. They are not healers. They cannot cure anything. God cures. God alone heals.* —Pastor Chuck Swindoll





## A Biblical Case for Healing

*James 5:13–16*



### Application: Four Practical Principles

In his book, *Flying Closer to the Flame*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll recalls praying for a friend with cancer who had asked for prayer. Amazingly, God healed the man! Pastor Chuck reflects,

I can't explain what happened. He couldn't either. I have no powers within me that produce healing in anyone else. The God I know is the same God you know, and I simply trusted Him and prayed for His will to be done. The Spirit of God healed my friend sovereignly and silently. And best of all, God got all the glory.<sup>2</sup>

God has the power to heal, and He does heal when He chooses to. Our part is to follow the biblical steps. Let's review them in principle form.

- *Confession of sin is healthy—employ it.* Don't let sins build up in your life to the point that they make you physically ill.
- *Praying for one another is essential—practice it.* If you become ill, call upon the elders of your church to come and pray for you. Ask others to pray.
- *Use of medical assistance is imperative—utilize it.* Asking for prayer but ignoring proper medical treatment was not James' point.
- *When healing comes from God—claim it.* Whether or not the illness is the result of personal sin, when God heals, remember to thank Him and give Him the glory!

Write down how you can apply these principles. Do you need to ask for prayer? To pray for another person? To seek medical advice? To confess sin? (Take a moment right now to pray!)





### A Biblical Case for Healing

*James 5:13–16*

From the beginning to the end of James 5:13–16, prayer is the focus. Prayer connects a believer's heart with the sovereign will of God. If we have joy and health, we should sing praises to God. If we suffer with mental, emotional, or physical pain, then we must pray for healing, confess our sins, and receive God's forgiveness. Most importantly, we must entrust ourselves to God's perfect plan.



#### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You for Your marvelous power to heal us physically and restore us spiritually. I seek Your will for my situation. Bind up my broken heart. Strengthen my failing body. Renew my suffering Spirit according to Your wise and merciful plan. In the name of Jesus and according to Your will, amen.*

#### ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on James, 1 and 2 Peter*, vol. 13 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 124.
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Flying Closer to the Flame* (Dallas: Word, 1993), 200.





## FLYING CLOSER TO THE FLAME

### STUDY ELEVEN

## When the Spirit Brings a Slow Recovery

*Acts 28:1–10*

*I would like to dedicate this message to you who are in the process of healing, and you can't explain why it's taking so long. The counsel you've heard sounds like clichés. You don't need more verses; you just need time.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**I**NSTANT, miraculous healing is rare. Usually, healing takes time . . . sometimes, a *long* time.

When lingering pain and discouraging setbacks mark the journey, lengthy recoveries can seem like a trek through a deep cavern filled with confusing turns, dead ends, and fears of never finding the way out. Promising therapies fall short. Medical treatments fail to bring results. At these times, depression sets in. Domestic conflict can even erupt as those close to us secretly wonder if we even want to get better.

Pastor Chuck Swindoll admits,

We much prefer hearing accounts of miracles as opposed to long, nonsensational stories of slow recoveries. In fact, we tend to be impatient with those who can't seem to take our advice and “snap out of it” or “get well soon,” like the greeting card urges them to do. But like it or not, the wise words of Hippocrates are true: “Healing is a matter of time.”<sup>1</sup>

What do we do when the Spirit brings a slow recovery? How do we navigate this dark tunnel?

Such an extended period of healing came at a crucial hour in Paul's life when he was shipwrecked on a small island. Acts 28:1–10 gives us a brief account of this unique season for Paul and those near him, and it offers vital spiritual lessons for our own slow recovery.



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## **When the Spirit Brings a Slow Recovery**

*Acts 28:1–10*



### **PREPARE YOUR HEART**

Have you or has someone you love entered a season of slow recovery? An accident may have caused the injury, maybe disease was at the root, or the wounds may be from emotional trauma. Recovery has included a string of hospital stays and appointments with more specialists than you can count.

Consider God's Word as your road map and the Holy Spirit as your ever-present companion. In prayer, ask the Lord for wisdom and encouragement as you open the Bible and take the next step toward healing. Express your prayer here.



### **TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES**

Paul's shipwreck occurred on his trip to face his trial in Rome. His ship was caught in a violent storm and driven into open waters. Finally, after fourteen days lost at sea, the crew sighted land and made for shore. The battered ship hit a shoal, and when the vessel started breaking apart, the exhausted passengers spilled over the rails into the treacherous shallows. Some swam desperately while others clung to the ship's debris like life rafts. All 276 people made it to land alive but soaking wet and with all their belongings gone (Acts 27:13–44).

The ordeal had taken a tremendous physical and emotional toll on everyone. They were going to need time to heal on their unplanned stop at this island of refuge.





## When the Spirit Brings a Slow Recovery

*Acts 28:1–10*



### Observation: What Happened on Malta

As you read the account, you'll observe the pronouns, *we* and *us*. Luke, the author of Acts and Paul's "beloved doctor" (Colossians 4:14), included himself as Paul's traveling companion, fellow missionary, and personal physician.

Recalling the incident, Luke wrote, "Once we were safe on shore, we learned that we were on the island of Malta" (Acts 28:1). To get your bearings, look up Malta in your Bible atlas or on the map, "[Paul's Journey to Rome](#)," at [insight.org](#). The island is about 60 miles south of Sicily, eighteen miles long and eight miles wide.<sup>2</sup> What do you observe about the storm-driven path the ship took on its voyage and the remote location of Malta?

Paul's unexpected detour to Malta proved to be a God-ordained respite for healing. Read [Acts 28:1–10](#) and list the ways the people of Malta applied the therapeutic balm of kindness to Paul and the other passengers.

The islanders could have turned a blind eye to the plight of the passengers or, worse, exploited their misfortune. Instead, they extended welcoming hands. How refreshing are acts of kindness when we're healing!





## When the Spirit Brings a Slow Recovery

*Acts 28:1–10*

People can be fickle, however, even when their hearts are in the right place. How did the islanders illustrate their fickle nature toward Paul in [Acts 28:3–6](#)?

How did Paul return their goodwill toward him with goodwill of his own in [28:7–9](#)? How did Paul's actions follow Jesus' instructions when He sent out His disciples in [Luke 10:5–9](#)?

*In the process of healing, Paul ministered to someone else. Helping others is part of recovery . . . not early on, but eventually. You are being prepared for such.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



### Interpretation: Two Kinds of Healing

Publius' father was sick with a potentially fatal island illness, fever and dysentery. How was Paul's healing of Publius' father similar to Jesus' healing in [Matthew 8:14–15](#) and [Luke 13:10–13](#)?





## When the Spirit Brings a Slow Recovery

*Acts 28:1–10*

How do we interpret Paul's actions? As an apostle of Christ, what truth was he signaling through this instantaneous healing of Publius' father?

*This was the only case in the New Testament outside the person of Jesus Christ in which any other person healed by laying on of hands. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

As news spread, other sick people came for help. Luke used a different term to describe their healing, *therapeuō*, from which we get our English word, “therapy.” The New American Standard Bible translates the word, “getting cured” (Acts 28:9). According to *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*,

It suggests not miraculous healings but medical treatment, probably at the hands of Luke the physician. Verses 10 and 11 suggest that this medical ministry lasted throughout the three months [sic] stay at Malta.<sup>3</sup>

So, it's possible that, while one person was healed instantly, the other sick people were cured over time. One thing was certain, the Holy Spirit was involved in both kinds of healing—whether by miracle or by medicine.

*Through prolonged recovery, God does things in us, and cutting that process short is not the task of any individual. Sometimes it takes time. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### Correlation: The Spirit's Ministry during Recovery

We all hope to sail through recovery. So, when problems drive our recovery process off course, we can feel like we've been shipwrecked on a remote island—stripped of everything we hold dear and wondering, *Where am I?*





## When the Spirit Brings a Slow Recovery

*Acts 28:1–10*

And yet, the Holy Spirit is with us on our “islands” and may have led us to these places to heal us in body *and* soul. The psalmist reflected on his afflictions,

*My suffering was good for me,  
for it taught me to pay attention to your decrees.* (Psalm 119:71)

Recovery forces us to stop and listen to the Spirit in ways we wouldn’t otherwise. What eternal perspectives does the Spirit teach us during recovery, according to [2 Corinthians 4:16–18](#)?

How does the Spirit deepen our character during our suffering, according to [Romans 5:3–5](#)?

Pastor Chuck Swindoll summarizes the Spirit’s inner ministry during recovery:

A major benefit of taking time to heal occurs within you where the Spirit is doing some of His best work. Almost imperceptibly, you are becoming a person with keener sensitivity, a broader base of understanding, and a longer fuse! Patience is a by-product of pain. So is tolerance with others and obedience before God. It is difficult to know how to classify these characteristics, but for lack of a better title, let’s call the whole package *Spirit-given wisdom*.<sup>4</sup>





## When the Spirit Brings a Slow Recovery

*Acts 28:1–10*



### Application: Gleaning the Spirit's Wisdom

Through the healing process, the Spirit often helps us see what's truly important, the things of eternal value. If you are enduring a season of slow recovery, what wisdom is the Spirit giving you?

How has He opened your eyes to see God in a new light during your recovery?

How are you healing spiritually as well as physically?

If you know someone who is going through a slow recovery, remember the example of the kind people of Malta. When it was time to leave, the people showered “honors” on them, and supplied them with “everything [they] would need for the trip” (Acts 28:10).





## When the Spirit Brings a Slow Recovery

Acts 28:1–10

How can you act kindly, give honor, and show support to the recovering person you know?

People who feel stranded on an “island” of recovery may be grieving the loss of a loved one whose death was tragic and devastating, healing from an emotional trauma or mental illness, recovering from addiction, convalescing from illness, surgery, disease, or enduring a multitude of other afflictions.

If you’re one of these people, let Luke’s account of Paul on Malta encourage you. Receive people’s acts of kindness as refreshment from God. Accept their fickle nature with patience. As you’re able, find ways to help others who need God’s healing touch. When it’s time to leave, thank the Lord for the Spirit’s wisdom that only a slow recovery can bring.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You for the lessons I’ve learned during my period of recovery. Suffering makes me a “real” person, frayed at the edges and full of scars but also more patient and compassionate because of the ordeal. Help me to lean on You through the pain and draw closer to You. Give me eyes to see others who need my support in their recovery. In Jesus’ name, amen.*

### ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Flying Closer to the Flame* (Dallas: Word, 1993), 227.
2. Thomas Constable, “Acts 28:1,” *Constable’s Notes*, netbible.org.
3. George E. Ladd, “Acts,” *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, ed. Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962, 1990), 1176.
4. Swindoll, *Flying Closer to the Flame*, 228.





## FLYING CLOSER TO THE FLAME

### STUDY TWELVE

## Power, Power . . . We've Got the Power!

### *Selected Scriptures*

*The filling of the Spirit includes living our lives yielded to the Spirit. We need His power, His working, His cleansing, and His freeing.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**W**HEN the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, His flame lit a fire in the fearful disciples gathered in the upper room. Emboldened, they took to the streets declaring the gospel in languages they had never spoken before (Acts 2:1–12). Peter and John healed a lame man in the name of the living Jesus (3:1–8), which set off a wave of phenomenal signs and wonders—all signaling a new age of the Spirit's ministry (2:43; 5:15–16; 8:6–8; 15:12; 19:11–12; 28:8).

Such displays of the Spirit's power were spectacular, but are they the norm for us? What manifestation of the Spirit should we expect to see? Does the Spirit display His power in other ways besides miracles? What are the typical, everyday acts of the Holy Spirit? Let's find out in this *Searching the Scriptures* study.



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

As you begin your study of God's Word, pray for the Spirit to reveal His message for you. Pray the psalmist's simple and heartfelt prayer:

*Open my eyes to see  
the wonderful truths in your instructions. (Psalm 119:18)*



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Power, Power . . . We've Got the Power!  
*Selected Scriptures*



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

A survey of the New Testament uncovers plenty of mentions of the Spirit's everyday manifestations. The number of evidences of the Spirit's power in this study may surprise you, and the list in the chart below is only a sampling. There's no end to the ways the Spirit ministers in our lives.



Observation: Finding Evidence of the Spirit's Empowering

After carefully reading each verse in the chart, write down the evidence you see. The list is long so it may take a little time. Don't rush. Make it personal by starting each evidence with the pronoun, "I"—such as, "I am," "I can," "I have," "I experience," and so forth. The first blank is filled in as an example.

Verses	Evidence of the Spirit's Power in My Life
<i>John 14:16</i>	<i>I am never truly alone because the Spirit never leaves me.</i>
<i>John 16:13</i>	
<i>Acts 1:8</i>	
<i>Acts 19:21; 20:22</i>	
<i>Romans 5:5</i>	
<i>Romans 7:6</i>	
<i>Romans 8:11</i>	
<i>Romans 8:23</i>	
<i>Romans 8:26–27</i>	
<i>Romans 14:17</i>	

*Continued on the next page*





**Power, Power . . . We've Got the Power!**

*Selected Scriptures*

*Continued from previous page*

Verses	Evidence of the Spirit's Power in My Life
<i>Romans 15:13</i>	
<i>Romans 15:30</i>	
<i>1 Corinthians 2:10</i>	
<i>1 Corinthians 2:12</i>	
<i>1 Corinthians 12:7, 11</i>	
<i>Galatians 4:6</i>	
<i>Galatians 5:16</i>	
<i>Galatians 5:22–23</i>	
<i>Ephesians 1:14</i>	
<i>Ephesians 6:18</i>	
<i>Philippians 2:1–2</i>	
<i>Philippians 3:3</i>	
<i>1 Thessalonians 1:5</i>	
<i>2 Thessalonians 2:13</i>	
<i>1 John 2:27</i>	
<i>1 John 4:4</i>	





## Power, Power . . . We've Got the Power!

### *Selected Scriptures*

None of these demonstrations of the Spirit's power appear phenomenal. No flashes of supernatural power light up this list. No ecstatic utterances, no visions, no healings, no casting out demons, no miracles.

Rather, these displays of the Spirit's power are more subtle and ongoing. Like spring showers that refresh the earth, the Spirit refreshes our souls and our relationships, helping us to mature in character, to feel Christ's peace and joy, to deepen our fellowship, and to connect intimately with our heavenly Father.

Do you feel encouraged by these evidences? Do you long to experience them more personally? What motivates you about this list?

Which of these evidences have you witnessed in your life recently?

*These are not exceptional, phenomenal things. They are routinely ours to enjoy and claim because the Spirit of God is filling us. This is the normal, Spirit-filled Christian life, about which we say too little. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*





## Power, Power . . . We've Got the Power!

### *Selected Scriptures*



### Interpretation: The Ministry of Intercession

In the interpretation phase, let's dig deeper into the Spirit's everyday ministry of intercession. Read again [Romans 8:26–27](#), and explain the meaning of these verses by putting them in your own words.

What situations of “weakness” might cause Christians to be at a loss to “know what God wants us to pray for” (8:26)?

What are “groanings that cannot be expressed in words” (8:26)? How do they put expression to our wordless prayers?





## Power, Power . . . We've Got the Power!

### *Selected Scriptures*

When the Spirit “pleads for us believers,” His prayers are in perfect “harmony with God’s own will” (Romans 8:27)—after all, He is God. What do the Spirit’s prayers on your behalf tell you about the nature of Holy Spirit and your relationship with Him?

How can the Spirit vitalize your prayers, especially when you don’t know what to pray for?

*The Spirit of God is, in fact, God. We are dealing with the person and work of the Triune God. Much of His work is beyond our comprehension. He is limitless and mysterious at times. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*





## Power, Power . . . We've Got the Power!

### *Selected Scriptures*



#### Correlation: The Benefit of Freedom

Walking in the everyday power of the Spirit includes one benefit that weaves through all His ministries and ties them together: freedom. In [2 Corinthians 3:7–18](#), Paul contrasted the “old way” of living by the law with the “new way” of living in the power of the Holy Spirit. Read the passage and write down the features of the new way in 3:8, 12, 17–18.

Based on the context of this passage, what did Paul mean by *freedom* (3:17)? Freedom *from* what? Freedom *for* what?

How might the Spirit free you from condemnation to live more confidently in His power?





## Power, Power . . . We've Got the Power!

### *Selected Scriptures*

*When we are filled with the Spirit, we have freedom from constraint and fear, from tedious perfectionism and bondage. We are free to cry when we grieve, to laugh when we're joyful. We are free to be. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### **Application: Admitting Our Need**

Let's pull out a few gems from the Spirit's box of treasures to claim as our own. Review what you wrote in the chart. What aspects of the Spirit's everyday power from this list do you need most today?

In the space below, express your dependence on the Spirit's power in this area of need.

Perhaps you're in one of those situations in which you don't know what to pray for or even hope for. In what ways does it help knowing that the Spirit is interceding for you?





## **Power, Power . . . We've Got the Power!**

### *Selected Scriptures*

What truth from this study can you share with someone else today who needs the Spirit's encouragement?

Walking in the “new way” of the Spirit, we find strength to grow in faith, experience peace, and find God. The Spirit's freedom is ours to experience, and His power is ours to claim in every aspect of our lives. That's the true wonder of flying closer to the flame.



### **A FINAL PRAYER**

*Father, thank You for the mysterious ways in which You move in my life through Your Holy Spirit. I confess that I'm drawn to the spectacular. But I need the everyday manifestations of the Spirit's power today. I'll leave the miracles to You in Your time and Your way. In Jesus' name, amen.*





## FLYING CLOSER TO THE FLAME

### STUDY THIRTEEN

## Is That All There Is to the Spirit's Ministry?

### *Selected Scriptures*

*Since the miracles don't flow as they once did during the apostolic era, does that mean the Spirit's ministry is over? No, not over—just different.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

THE goal of our *Searching the Scriptures* series has been to get to know the Holy Spirit intimately as our closest companion. We learned that the Spirit's presence within us is permanent. "He will never leave you," Jesus promised His disciples (John 14:16). The Holy Spirit identifies us "as His own" (Ephesians 1:13). He knows what we need better than we do, and He never stops praying for us (Romans 8:26–27). The Spirit ministers with such a personal touch!

In addition, as we are filled with the Spirit, His inner dynamic:

- Emboldens us with unshakable confidence
- Reveals the depths of God's wisdom
- Draws us close to our Abba Father
- Guides us in the truth and leads us in God's path

In all these ways, we experience intimacy with the Spirit. But there's more! We have yet to consider the gifts of the Spirit—which we'll examine in this *Searching the Scriptures* study.





## Is That All There Is to the Spirit's Ministry?

### *Selected Scriptures*



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

As you open your Bible, invite the Holy Spirit to minister to you personally. Receive the Scripture as a message from God to your heart, and let His truths deepen your trust in Him.

*Father, I seek Your peace through the message You have for me today. I long to rest more securely in the care You've provided through the Spirit. I invite Your Spirit to guide me into the truth and usher me into Your presence today. In Jesus' name, amen.*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Read [1 Corinthians 12:7](#) and write down the purpose for the gifts of the Spirit.

Paul listed the spiritual gifts in his letters to the Corinthians and Romans and stated that we all possess at least one of these gifts. What are they, and how do they benefit the body of Christ? Let's find out.





Is That All There Is to the Spirit's Ministry?

Selected Scriptures



Observation: Gifts of the Spirit

We observe a passage of Scripture by simply noting what it says without trying to interpret it. Overview the lists of spiritual gifts in [1 Corinthians 12:8–10, 28](#) and [Romans 12:4–8](#), and then, in the chart below, write down what you observe.

The Gifts of the Spirit	
“A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.” (1 Corinthians 12:7)	
1 Corinthians 12:8–10, 28	Romans 12:4–8

The gifts in these two passages combine to form a master list. Did you note specific roles such as apostle, prophet, and teacher? Paul mentions these roles and others in [Ephesians 4:11](#). Write down what you observe in this verse.





## Is That All There Is to the Spirit's Ministry?

### *Selected Scriptures*

Like members of a physical body, we perform a different function in the body of Christ, yet we all work together in unity for the benefit of the whole. The goal is that “we will be mature in the Lord” (Ephesians 4:13).

In [Ephesians 2:19–22](#), Paul explained the unique purpose of the apostles and prophets in the formation of the church. What was that, and why was it so important?

Once the apostles and prophets laid the foundation, their work was done. Let's take a closer look at the special functions of the apostles and prophets in the formative years of the church.



### **Interpretation: The Gifts That Served Their Purpose**

Before the completion of the New Testament, the apostles and prophets received God's messages and communicated them to believers. Their Spirit-inspired teaching formed the doctrines and practices on which the church was built and which became the Scriptures we hold today.

Why do you think the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to perform signs and wonders, miracles and healings during the formation of the early church, according to [Acts 5:12–13](#)?





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What did Paul mean when he wrote that certain gifts “will become useless” (*1 Corinthians 13:8–10*)?

What point was Paul making about putting “away childish things,” (*13:11*), as the church grew from infancy to a worldwide movement?

What conclusion can you draw regarding the need for apostles and prophets today? What about the need for the supernatural sign gifts, such as miracles, healing, and speaking in tongues today?

*It was necessary before there was a Bible and while the foundation of the church was being laid for there to be gifts like tongues, interpretation of tongues, apostleship, miracles, and healing. These were essential for authenticating the messengers, establishing the church, and propagating the gospel rapidly through the various languages. But through the progress of revelation and the passing of time, some ministries ceased. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*





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#### **Correlation: Restraining and Regenerating Ministries of the Spirit**

Some ministries of the Spirit change over time, but two ministries will last until the end of the age. According to [2 Thessalonians 2:7–8](#), what is the Holy Spirit doing in the world today, and why is this ministry so vitally important?

Also, according to [John 3:6–8](#) and [Titus 3:5](#), what else does the Holy Spirit do in the souls of people when they are converted?

While the Holy Spirit restrains the tide of evil with one hand, He rescues sinners with the other. Can you imagine what our world will be like without the restraining and rescuing power of the Holy Spirit? We shudder to think of the darkness that will descend on our planet when His influence is taken away. Until then, we relish His work in our lives.

*The Spirit is still at work, touching people's lives and using people like us. My hope in this series is that the Spirit will become your daily helper as you realize His power and the necessity of His presence in your life. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*





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### Application: Final Thoughts about the Helper

Every time you use your spiritual gift, you bear witness to the Spirit's power and presence in the body of Christ. What do you think your spiritual gift might be?

How has the Helper helped others through your gift?

What does it feel like for the Holy Spirit to do things through you that you could never accomplish on your own?





## Is That All There Is to the Spirit's Ministry?

### *Selected Scriptures*

Reflecting on all the ongoing ministries of the Spirit that we've studied in our series, which ministry is the most personal for you right now?

Who knows how the Spirit might manifest Himself in your life today! Perhaps He may bring to mind a truth of Scripture when you need it most. Or open or close a door to confirm God's will for you. Or help you discern danger. Or give you peace that settles on your soul when you know God is with you. Or use the spiritual gift He gave you to build up another believer. There are *so many* blessings in our intimate walk with the Spirit! Don't let today pass without thanking Him for His ministry in your life.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, my heart overflows with gratitude! Thank You for Your Spirit, who lifts my heavy heart and fills me with strength when I feel like giving up. My future is secure because Your Spirit has placed His seal upon my soul, marking me for eternity. I have new life because of Him, and I am so thankful for the indwelling, empowering ministry of the Spirit in my life. In Jesus' name, amen.*





## FLYING CLOSER TO THE FLAME

### STUDY FOURTEEN

## Let's Just Praise the Lord

*Psalm 146–150*

*Those who praise God are realistic people who live in realistic times, but their hearts overflow with joy*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**W**E culminate our series on flying closer to the flame with praise. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, worship comes naturally, doesn't it? God “planted eternity in the human heart,” the writer of Ecclesiastes observed (Ecclesiastes 3:11). That eternal part of us yearns to connect with our eternal God. Praise is the Spirit's pathway that leads us to the presence of God, where our souls feel most at home.

The last five psalms in the book of Psalms are our text. Because each psalm begins and ends with the call to worship, *hallelujah*, we might think of these psalms as the “Hallelujah Chorus” of the Scriptures—a fitting finale to send us out soaring on the wings of praise.



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Begin with a prayer inviting the Lord to reveal Himself through His Word.

*Father, show me the glory of Your nature through my study. I long for a fresh vision of who You are so that I may worship You with my whole heart today. In Jesus' name, amen.*



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## Let's Just Praise the Lord

*Psalms 146–150*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The book of Psalms is an ancient Hebrew collection of praise songs written by various lyricists over a span of a thousand years. For more background, read the overview article, “*Psalms*,” at [insight.org](https://www.insight.org), and review the chart that accompanies the article.

Psalms 146–150 crowns the book with a repeating refrain—“Praise the Lord!” This invocation opens and closes each psalm and is a translation of the Hebrew, *hallelujah*. This compound word contains two terms: *halel*, meaning “to boast,” and *Yah*, the three-letter word representing the Hebrew name of God. With this jubilant exultation, the psalmist leads worshipers in some of the loftiest expressions of praise in all the Bible.



### Observation: The When, Who, Where, How, and Why of Praise

In *Searching the Scriptures*, we first read our text slowly and carefully, observing the when, who, where, how, and why of a passage. In Psalms 146–150, each psalm emphasizes one of these five facets. Taken as a whole, then, these praise songs offer us a complete experience of worship.

#### When to Praise—Psalm 146

Read [Psalm 146](#). When do we praise the Lord, according to 146:2?





## Let's Just Praise the Lord

*Psalm 146–150*

Even when we are at our lowest point, *especially then*, we praise the Lord who is our helper and source of hope (Psalm 146:5). What desperate circumstances do you observe in the list in [146:7–9](#), and what help and hope does the Lord give?

*When we're under a load of care, we usually don't praise. But in the Christian life, God has one formula to keep us joyful when we're under the load, and that's praise. Praise harmonizes with joy. Without one, we will never have the other. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

### Whom We Praise—Psalm 147

This psalm reminds us “to sing praises to our God” (Psalm 147:1), not people. We need that reminder, don't we? We tend to idolize people for their beauty, ingenuity, and talents. Even in church, the limelight can shift from the song to the singer, from the truth of God's Word to the eloquence of the preacher.

Read [Psalm 147](#). Notice how the psalmist fixes our gaze on the Lord and doesn't let us look away. Write down the verbs the psalmist uses to describe the Lord's achievements, power, and character.

*We are so enamored with praising others that to not praise people when we come together has become unusual. God is pleased when we praise Him! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*





## Let's Just Praise the Lord

*Psalm 146–150*

### Where We Praise—Psalm 148

Where is the best place to worship? A cathedral with vaulted ceilings and stained-glass windows? In [Psalm 148](#), the psalmist tours us through the most inspiring worship centers, and none of them were made by human hands. Read the psalm and log the places you visit and the marvels you see—all formed into being by “his command” (Psalm 148:5).

*God gave us the beauty of this earth to prompt praise to Him. Where do we praise the Lord?  
Everywhere we go! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

### How We Praise—Psalm 149

The fourth psalm in this parade of praise instructs us how. [Read 149](#) and write down what you find.

*There is a freshness and a freedom that comes in praise. When the Spirit of God prompts  
you in your prayer time, just enjoy it! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*





## Let's Just Praise the Lord

*Psalm 146–150*

### Why We Praise—Psalm 150

The final psalm wraps the psalter in a golden bow. Read [Psalm 150](#) and list the two reasons that sum up the infinite number of reasons to fill God's sanctuary with the sounds of worship.

We can spend eternity recounting what God has done and who He is—"his mighty works" and "unequaled greatness" (Psalm 150:2). There is no limit to the praiseworthiness of our King!

*Here's a simple formula for worship. Praise God for His work—what He does. His Word—what He says. His person—who He is. And His plan—what He has arranged. With that, you've covered all the bases. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### Interpretation: Worship through Music

The psalmist instructs us in Psalm 150 to worship the Lord with "a blast of the ram's horn," "the lyre," "the tambourine," "strings and flutes," and "loud clanging cymbals" (Psalm 150:3–5). Can you imagine those ancient instruments blaring all at once? What a lively racket!

What does it mean to worship the Lord through music in our culture?





## Let's Just Praise the Lord

*Psalms 146–150*

What biblical principle can we use as a guideline regarding music in worship?

Music may sound different today than in David's day, but as a means of worship, music transcends culture and time. God loves hearing our worship through music. Can the same be said of our worship through dance?



### Correlation: Worship through Dance

Read the account of David dancing before the ark in [2 Samuel 6:12–15](#). Other kings would have walked or ridden in a stately manner ahead of the ark, but not David. He traded his royal robes and crown for a basic priest's linen ephod and danced "with all his might" before His King (2 Samuel 6:14).

We're not David leading the ark of the covenant, and the setting is not ancient Israel; however, there are principles to glean from David's exuberance. What universal principle about worship can you write based on David's dancing before the Lord?

*When is the last time you danced for the praise of God? There are times when we're so overwhelmed with praise that we have to release it. I've danced all over the living room and the den in praise. I had to dance to get it out! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*





## Let's Just Praise the Lord

*Psalms 146–150*



### Application: Worship When We're Filled with the Spirit

When we're filled with the Spirit, our praise wells up from the deepest part of our being and spills over in song and, yes, sometimes dance. The point isn't so much about the way we worship but about the joy in our worship—joy that comes from the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

As you wrap up this series, think about the ways in which the Spirit prompts your praise.

*When do you praise?* Try worshiping during the ordinary parts of your day. How might you do that?

*Whom do you praise?* What reminder might help you to sing the praises of people less and the praises of God more?





## Let's Just Praise the Lord

*Psalms 146–150*

*Where do you praise?* For the psalmist, the grandest cathedral for worship was creation, but you can praise God anywhere and anytime—in your car, your living room, or in your backyard while weeding the flower bed. Where will you worship today?

*How do you praise?* The psalmist urges us to let loose our spiritual joy. What might you do to free yourself up to worship with new songs and in new ways?

*Why do you praise?* Follow Pastor Chuck's formula to give substance to your worship. Praise God for His *work*—what He does. His *Word*—what He says. His *person*—who He is. And His *plan*—what He has arranged. List a few reasons for praise below.





## Let's Just Praise the Lord

*Psalms 146–150*

Now as the Spirit fills your heart with irrepressible joy, don't hold back. *Praise the Lord!*

*How good to sing praises to our God!  
How delightful and how fitting! (Psalm 147:1)*



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, it is good for me to praise You with my whole being—mind, heart, body, and soul. Stir in me joy that can't be contained. Fill me with Your Spirit and set my heart free to sing the wonders of Your love as long as I live, with my dying breath, and through eternity! In Jesus' name, amen.*





# FLYING CLOSER TO THE FLAME

## STUDY FOURTEEN

# SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

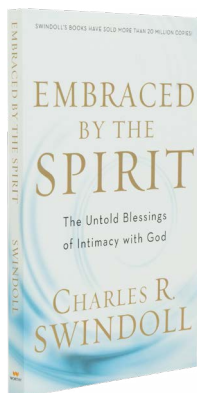
## STUDY

### Let's Just Praise the Lord

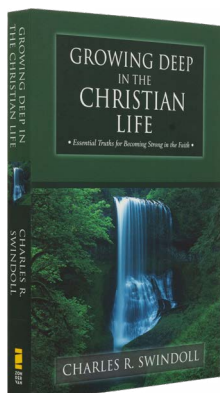
*Psalms 146–150*



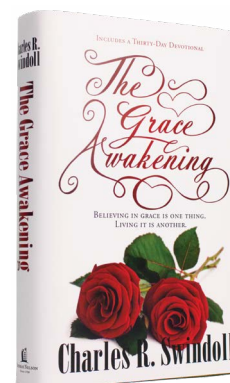
### Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2022 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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