

Th123 A Study of the Holy Spirit

Th123-11 The Holy Spirit Gives Life to the Church

A fine car is a wonderful thing. However, without fuel a car is useless. It cannot perform the function for which it was created. It is the same with a church. A large gathering of people on Sunday morning may be very impressive. However, without the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, that church has no life. It cannot perform the function for which it was created, no matter how wonderful it may appear from the outside. The Spirit alone gives life and meaning to any church. In this lesson we will look at five ways the Holy Spirit works in the church. The Spirit gives the body of Christ the vitality it needs to fulfill its God-ordained work in the world.

The first way the Holy Spirit gives life to the church is by indwelling it. Wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is life. And where the Spirit is not present, there is no life. He is, indeed, the “Spirit of Life.” Jesus put it this way, “The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing” (John 6:63). Paul wrote to the church in Corinth and reminded them, “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst?” (1Cor 3:16). As the Spirit of the Lord fills the church, He gives to it divine life and purpose. But, how then does the Spirit indwell the church—the body of Christ? He indwells the church by indwelling its true members, those who have been born of the Spirit. They have totally committed themselves to Jesus Christ and His mission.

A second way the Holy Spirit gives life to the church is by adding newly regenerated believers to the church. When someone repents of their sins and receives Christ as Savior, the Holy Spirit comes inside them. He then places them into the body of Christ. They become “living stones” in God’s spiritual building (1Peter 2:5). Paul wrote, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1Cor 12:13, NASB). This is what happened in the Book of Acts. As people heard the good news and believed, “the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). Everyone who has been truly born again is part of the body of Christ, the church.

A third way the Spirit gives life to the church is by empowering its members as Christ’s witnesses. Jesus promised His disciples, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8). The church exists to bear witness to Christ and His saving work and to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19). However, it can only do this work in the Spirit’s power. This is why it is essential that every follower of Christ be empowered by the Holy Spirit. We will discuss this essential work of the Holy Spirit more in the next lesson.

A fourth way the Holy Spirit gives life to the church is by inspiring God’s people to worship Him. When followers of Jesus respond to the Spirit, He lifts their hearts in true spiritual worship. Jesus said, “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24, NASB). Paul described the church as those “who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh” (Phil 3:3). In another place, he explained how we are to worship by the Spirit. He said, “When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation” (1Cor 14:26).

All of these activities are to be carried out as the Spirit fills and prompts believers who are gathered in worship. A worship service only has spiritual life when the Spirit fills and inspires God's people to worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

A final way the Holy Spirit enlivens the church is by giving spiritual gifts to God's people. Paul said that God gives these gifts "to each one...for the common good" of all (1Cor 12:7). Someone has observed that these gifts include revelation gifts, given that we might know the mind of God. Prophetic gifts are given that we might speak the words of God. And power gifts are given that we might do the works of God.

These spiritual gifts have two purposes. First, they are given to build up and strengthen the church. Paul talks about this in his first letter to the Corinthians. Secondly, they are given to enable the church to fulfill its evangelistic mission. We see this happening throughout the Book of Acts. We will discuss spiritual gifts more in Lesson 29. For now, it is important that we realize that these gifts are one way that the Spirit gives life and strength to Christ's body—the church.

This lesson is **important** because it teaches how the Holy Spirit gives life to the church and enables it to fulfill its reason for being.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that we must always seek the Spirit's presence in all of our church gatherings, so that He can actively work in the hearts of God's people.

Let's **review** some important truths from this lesson:

1. The Holy Spirit gives life to the church, enabling it to fulfill God's mission in the earth. List five ways the Holy Spirit does this.
 - A. [PAUSE] If you answered, "The Holy Spirit indwells the church, baptizes believers into the church, empowers the church for witness, inspires true worship, and gives gifts to the church," you answered correctly.
2. How does the Holy Spirit minister to a person once he or she has put their faith in Christ and has repented of their sins?
 - A. [PAUSE] If you answered that the Holy Spirit enters into that person's life and baptizes them into the body of Christ, you are right.
3. Why is it important that the Holy Spirit be present in all of our worship services?
 - A. [PAUSE] If you answered that the Holy Spirit must be present in all of our worship services because He is the One who lifts our hearts in true spiritual worship, you are correct.
4. For what two reasons does the Holy Spirit give gifts to the church?
 - A. [PAUSE] If you answered that the Holy Spirit gives gifts to the church to build up believers and to evangelize the lost, you answered well.

Your **assignment** is to re-listen to this lesson several times until you are able to answer all of the review questions correctly and are able to teach the lesson to others.