

Th123 A Study of the Holy Spirit

Th123-27 Ministry in the Spirit

Someone has rightly observed that we can do the work of God in one of two ways. We can do it in our own strength, or we can do it in the Spirit's strength. Jesus and the early Christians chose to minister in the Spirit's strength. As a result, they ministered with great power and authority. In this lesson, we will learn how we too can make use of the Spirit's power in our own ministries today.

We must begin by knowing how the Holy Spirit empowers us for ministry. At the end of His ministry on earth, Jesus issued two final commands. First, He ordered His followers to preach the gospel to all nations (Mark 16:15). This command is known as the Great Commission. Next, Jesus ordered them to wait in Jerusalem until they had been empowered by the Holy Spirit. He knew that before they could fulfill His first command, they had to obey His second. The same is true for us today. We too must be empowered by the Holy Spirit to effectively carry out Jesus' commission. The ministries of Jesus and the early believers serve as models of how we should minister today.

Jesus came to earth to offer himself as a ransom for all people (Matt 20:28). He also came to show us how we should live and minister in the Spirit's power. Jesus began His ministry by being anointed by the Holy Spirit. He then went out and ministered in the Spirit's power. In doing this, He set the pattern for all who would follow Him in ministry: "Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these" (John 14:12).

Like Jesus, the early church ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit. They were first empowered on the Day of Pentecost. They then went out and ministered with great power and effectiveness. They were simply following the pattern set by Jesus—first, be empowered; then, minister. We, too, have been called to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit, just as did Jesus and the early believers.

Not only does the Holy Spirit empower us for ministry, He enables us in ministry. He does this in at least four ways:

First, the Spirit inspires us to do ministry. In the Book of Acts, the Holy Spirit inspired Peter to go to Caesarea and preach to the Gentiles there. He will do the same for us today. He does this by giving to us a burden for the lost, a love for the church, and a vision for the world.

Next, the Spirit empowers our witness to the lost. Jesus promised, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). We can become powerful witnesses for Christ only if we will allow the Holy Spirit to fill us and use us in His harvest field. This empowering includes an anointing to speak persuasively, like Stephen the deacon (Acts 6:10). And it includes gifts of the Holy Spirit to supernaturally confirm the Word, as in the miracles of the deacon, Philip (Acts 8:6).

Third, the Spirit anoints our preaching and teaching. We will discuss this aspect of the Spirit's enablement in the next lesson.

Finally, the Spirit manifests himself through spiritual gifts. The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost resulted in a dramatic release of miraculous power in the disciples' ministries. This release of power manifested itself in speaking in tongues, prophetic preaching, powerful healings, signs and wonders, exorcisms, supernatural deliverance from danger, dreams and visions, and Holy Spirit baptisms. Today, if we will be filled with the Spirit, and boldly proclaim Christ to the lost, we too can expect the same supernatural confirmations.

How then can we ensure the Spirit's help in ministry? We can do this in three ways. First, we can ensure the Spirit's help *by being filled with the Spirit*. The empowering of the Holy Spirit is an essential requirement for all spiritual ministry: "You will receive power . . . you will be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). Next, we can ensure the Spirit's help in ministry *by walking in step with the Spirit*: "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit" (Gal 5:25). We do this by living lives of prayer, holiness, and yieldedness to the Spirit of God. Finally, we can ensure the Spirit's aid in ministry *by making use of the Spirit's help*. As we walk in the Spirit, we can expect ministry opportunities to come our way. At such times, we can depend on the Holy Spirit to tell us how we should respond. When He does, we must act in obedience and faith to receive His help.

These two elements—obedience and faith—are key to releasing the Spirit's power in ministry. When we act in obedience to the Word of God and inner promptings of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit comes and anoints us for ministry. For example, as we obey Christ's command to witness, the Spirit comes upon us and empowers us. The opposite is also true. If we disobey, and refuse to witness, the anointing does not come. Many Spirit-filled Christians have failed to become effective witnesses for Christ. They have simply refused to obey His command to witness to those with whom they come in contact. If, however, you will obey the Spirit's prompting, He will empower your witness. The principle is this: we must first obey, *and then* the Spirit comes to enable us.

The second key element is faith. The anointing that comes through an act of obedience is released by faith. Like an electrical switch, an act of faith on the part of the Christian worker releases into the situation the anointing to preach, prophesy, heal the sick, and so forth.

This is how it works: A ministry opportunity presents itself. The Spirit-filled disciple discerns the Spirit's voice that prompts him or her to minister. They now have a choice: they can obey the Spirit's voice, or they can ignore it. If they obey, the anointing comes. If, however, they disobey, the anointing goes away. Once the Christian worker obeys the Spirit's voice and begins to minister, he or she must then act in faith. Through a bold act of faith, the anointing is released into the life of the needy person, and the work is done.

This lesson is **important** because in it you have learned how the Holy Spirit will come and enable you to minister.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that through prayer, obedience, and faith we can appropriate the Spirit's power in ministry.

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

1. How did Jesus and the New Testament church model the way to minister?
A. [PAUSE] If you said, "Jesus and the New Testament believers ministered in the power and anointing of the Spirit, and so should we today," you are correct.
2. In what four ways does the Holy Spirit enable us for ministry?
A. [PAUSE] If you answered, "The Holy Spirit enables us in ministry by inspiring us to do ministry, by empowering our witness, by anointing our teaching and preaching, and by manifesting himself through spiritual gifts," you are right.
3. Name three ways we can ensure the Spirit's help in our ministries.
A. [PAUSE] If you answered that we can ensure the Spirit's help in our ministries by being filled with the Spirit, by walking in step with the Spirit, and by making use of the Spirit's help by our obedience and faith, you answered correctly.
4. What two elements are key to releasing the Spirit's power in ministry?
A. [PAUSE] If you answered that two key elements to releasing the Spirit's power in ministry are obedience and faith, you are right.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to apply its principles to your own life and ministry. Begin by asking the Lord to fill and/or refill you with the Holy Spirit. Then practice walking in step with the Spirit. Finally, when He prompts you to minister, do so, expecting Him to anoint and empower you.

Memorize this important instruction from the apostle Paul to the Galatians: "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit"(Galatians 5:25).